

Tuesday April 1 1997

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# The Guardian

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NEWSPAPER OF THE YEAR  
46,828

Linda Grant writes

## Return of the motor mouth

G2 page 5



Ian Jack on his second homeland



Education

## Business waits in the bike shed

Pages 10-11

Bullying strike action will win no favours or change, Blunkett tells NUT militants

# Labour warns off teachers

John Carvel  
Education Editor

**L**ABOUR yesterday delivered a sharp warning to teachers that a Blair government will never succumb to industrial action aimed at "bullying" the party into adopting more radical policies than those it is convinced will secure victory at the general election.

David Blunkett, the shadow education and employment secretary, launched a head-on offensive against leftwingers at the National Union of Teachers conference in Harrogate — the gathering at which he was jostled and abused two years ago at the start of his drive to distance the party from professional interest groups.

"We're not looking for conflict with the teaching profession... but we will be governing for the whole nation. We will not tolerate division or bullying or threats, not simply from those who attend union conferences but from anyone who has a vested interest in any party of our country," he said.

Tony Blair last night also insisted he would stand firm against the unions, warning them: "I'll simply say No."

"Actually, we've been very good at doing that when we need to do that," he told Kirsty Young in an interview for Channel 5's first full-length evening news programme.

Mr Blunkett was responding to conference resolutions threatening industrial action to change Labour policy to secure reduced class sizes and the abolition of grammar schools, performance leagues and the Office for Standards in Education, which is much hated by teachers. But his remarks carried a wider resonance about Labour's

determination not to be in hock to any union or interest group.

At a press conference he said Labour distinguished between strikes as a legitimate measure of last resort for trade unions to press grievances about their conditions of service, and industrial action taken to force a change in government policy.

There was not a democracy in the world that barred all strikes. "But there is no place whatever for strike action in terms of government policy on admissions or inspection or the rigour of testing... I don't think that withdrawing your labour and leaving children without a teacher assists in raising standards or raising the esteem of the teaching profession," he said.

"Our job is to ensure that every child in every school is given the opportunity that in the past has been confined to a few. However important they think they are, they will

not stand in the way of me and my colleagues delivering the changes to improve the education system."

Gillian Shepherd, the Education and Employment Secretary, said the militant resolutions agreed by the NUT



were the real voice of Labour. "I'm sure what we would see if Labour were elected is that Labour would reap what they have sown over the years," she said.

Mr Blunkett's assurances. "This shows that Labour is important in the face of union behaviour. They will do nothing to safeguard the education of our children if that risks upsetting the unions who give them cash for favours," he said.

In spite of Mr Blunkett's robust message, he got a standing ovation from more than half the delegates and no trouble from the rest. This was due in part to a passionate conclusion in which he defied critics to challenge his personal commitment to improving education.

He pointed to the six years

he had spent at evening classes to secure qualifications for university admission and time spent teaching at the heart of the South Yorkshire coalfield to help youngsters who were too shy to write off by the education system.

"When my own children went into an inner-city comprehensive with very low academic standards, I determined we would liberate the children we represent from the past dogma and fighting about the elite succeeding and the rest being written off."

"Anyone who doubts my commitment to lifting the standards of education needs to take me on personally in terms of what they have done and what I have done."

Mr Blunkett also won applause for pledges to scrap the nursery voucher scheme during the first term of a Labour government and to reduce class sizes for five to seven-year-olds to a maximum of 30.

"This is the start of a process of recognition that class size really does matter," he said.

Doug McAvoy, the NUT general secretary, welcomed these proposals but warned that the union reserved the right to take industrial action in defence of the education needs of the pupils as well as members' pay and conditions.

"We will fight to retain that right. That is not a union seeking to bully or threaten. It is a union saying we believe in our policies, we believe they are the best for children," he said.

Mr Blunkett took a further step to identify Labour with traditional methods of education when he recommended that children not use calculators at school until they were eight. "Mental arithmetic is a key skill which children must learn. They must also understand the basis on which the calculations are being made."

The Election



This campaign will be the longest, the fiercest and quite possibly the dirtiest in living memory. The Guardian will be an indispensable guide to the hostilities throughout. Our unrivalled team of reporters and analysts will break the tyranny of the soundbite and the spin doctor. The daily coverage which starts tomorrow will be the fullest and most reliable guide to the election ahead.



## Hapless Moby leaves giant problem behind

**M**OBY, the late wayward whale, was last night moored to a rope in the Firth of Forth as the authorities pondered who would act as undertaker to the 50ft corpse (left), writes *Ernest Clouston*.

The 40-ton sperm whale ran out of luck and water around noon low tide, 12 days after it first arrived in the estuary. It died an hour after becoming stranded on mud at Airth, said Alex Kilgour of the Deep-Sea World.

A beached whale normally dies rapidly because of the weight on its organs once it no longer has buoyancy. Experts will now decide how to dispose of Moby. One likely solution is a discreet, dynamited disposal at sea.

PHOTOGRAPH: MURDO MACLEOD

## Scots Tories accused of forcing chairman out

Hirst told to quit over dossier which did not exist, say friends

Lawrence Donegan

**T**HE Conservative Party in Scotland was in virtual meltdown last night, with senior officials being accused of "forcing" its former chairman out of office under false pretences, and rumours of an impending coup against the Secretary of State, Michael Forsyth.

Friends of Sir Michael Hirst, who resigned as the Scottish party chairman on Saturday after admitting to "past indiscretions" in his private life, claimed party officials had falsely told him a

newspaper dossier detailing his private life was about to be published and he should quit for the good of the party.

"There was no dossier and no story. Without the resignation statement issued by Hirst the newspapers would have had nothing to write about — he was duped," one source said.

As insiders painted a picture of organisational chaos at the party's Edinburgh headquarters, Sir Michael's replacement as chairman, Annabel Goldie, was forced to write to all local Tory chairmen in Scotland, urging them to ignore "outrageous" media

coverage of recent events and concentrate of the election campaign itself, and the visit of John Major later this week.

But last night there appeared little chance of that.

The party's leadership will come under further pressure to fully explain the circumstances of Sir Michael's resignation when Mr Forsyth makes his first public appearance of the campaign in Edinburgh today.

Mr Forsyth has been a conspicuous absentee amid the furor of recent days. Explanations for his absence, from "resting up before the campaign" to "taking care of ministerial business", have failed to stem disquiet within the party or media speculation.

There was furious briefing going on yesterday by two

camp within the Scottish party, with Mr Forsyth's friends insisting he was "ready for the campaign" and his opponents insisting that "after Hirst, Forsyth was the target".

Leftwing Tories in Scotland have still not forgotten Mr Forsyth's period as party chairman in the late-1980s, when he removed pro-devolutionists from the hierarchy in Edinburgh. They have seized on his discomfort as a chance to settle old scores. "If this anarchy continues then the party in London will have to send people up to take control," one said yesterday.

Last night's chaos has its roots in two events. The first was the announcement last week by Eastwood MP Allan Stewart that he would not be seeking re-election for the

second Tory seat in Scotland. This was followed by Sir Michael making it clear he wanted the nomination.

The second was a speculative telephone call from the newsdesk of a tabloid newspaper in Glasgow to Conservative Central Office in Edinburgh last Thursday, asking for a comment on rumours about the party chairman's private life. The request sent officials into a state of "complete and utter panic", according to one source. After a series of meetings between senior party officials and Sir Michael last Friday, it was agreed he should resign.

A story on Saturday morning, headlined "Top Scots Tory's Gay Love", detailed an alleged affair between a senior party figure and a researcher,

but did not name names. It did not need to. Sir Michael resigned at noon.

That afternoon, senior editors on Glasgow's Sunday Mail and the News of the World made frantic efforts to find out whether either had "bought the story". The fact was that neither newspaper had anything beyond the information provided by Sir Michael in his own resignation statement.

"When he resigned there no evidence to substantiate these allegations. So who was telling him that the evidence did exist — perhaps we will find that out in the next few days," one source close to the story said last night.

Wild and mysterious, page 5;  
Enter rabid right, page 9

## Inside

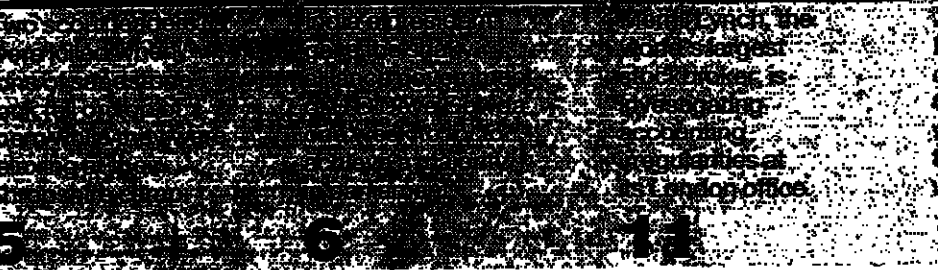
Britain

World News

Finance

Sport

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Benny Pugh, the Edinburgh trainer, is on course to win two Grand Nationals in a week after winning the Irish version with Mubadhar.



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Major forced to fudge intervention □ MP defies whips' orders to stand down □ Central Office hamstrung by rifts and confusion

# Tories split over isolating Hamilton

Ewen MacAskill, Chief Political Correspondent

**D**ERP divisions have opened up in the Tory election machine over how to scotch the Neil Hamilton cash for questions affair.

During the weekend Tory rightwingers blocked a plan by John Major and Brian Mawhinney, the Conservative chairman, to deal decisively with Mr Hamilton.

Mr Major had to settle for a fudge, sending out a letter last night warning Tory constitu-

ency associations they were taking a risk if they continued to back the MPs under suspicion.

He said that Mr Hamilton and other Tory MPs would lose the whip if criticised in Sir Gordon Downey's report on cash for questions.

But he was careful neither to back nor disown Mr Hamilton and the other MPs.

Reflecting the panic at Conservative Central Office over its campaign being overshadowed by the allegations, Mr Major said: "Unsubstantiated allegations, still under consideration against a handful of individuals, should not

cheat the electorate of the debate about which party is best suited to form the government for the next five years."

The in-fighting at Central Office invoked memories of the 1987 campaign wobble in which Lord Tebbit and Lord Young were at odds over strategy.

Mr Mawhinney and Mr Major, according to a Tory source, had planned a press conference to make a clean break with Mr Hamilton.

But this was dropped after protests from the No Turning Back group, the 20-strong clutch of MPs fiercely loyal to Baroness Thatcher, which in-

cludes Mr Hamilton. The group also includes Alan Duncan, who is in the Tory campaign team, and ministers such as Michael Portillo, the Defence Secretary.

dacy in the Tatton constituency.

The internal battle has been reflected in the muddled response of Central Office over the past three days. On Satur-

day, Central Office briefed journalists that Mr Major wanted Mr Hamilton out. On Sunday this remained the line, but, following the intervention of the rightwing, yesterday morning the message

was that the party was backing off Mr Hamilton. At least one MP expressed "bewilderment" at the sudden changes.

There will have been even more bewilderment last night when Mr Major came up with another version, aimed at bringing an end to the controversy. In a letter sent to all Conservative constituency chairmen, Mr Major dealt accusations that he had deliberately prorogued Parliament early to avoid publication of the Downey report.

He also rejected the charge that he had been indecisive in failing to force the Tatton constituency party to drop Mr

Hamilton. "It has been suggested that I disband constituency associations and impose new candidates. But under our Conservative Party constitution, the selection of a candidate is the responsibility of the association, the decision to contest the seat is for the candidate."

He added that the Downey report after the general election "may exonerate members from all, or most, serious criticisms. If so, well and good." But if it is "unfavourable, the Conservative Party will put the interest of Parliament and its reputation above all other matters."

Mr Major is almost certain to face questioning on these issues at the official launch of the Conservative campaign.

Any hopes he harbours that the row can be quickly brought to an end will be dashed if, as expected, the Liberal Democrats stand down in Tatton and join Labour in support of an anti-corruption candidate, who could be announced before the end of the week.

Wild and mysterious, page 5; Letters, page 5; Hugo Young and Martin Kettle, page 9

## Major letter warns chairmen of risk in backing MPs under suspicion

Government whips, according to a Tory source, met Mr Hamilton last week but he refused to stand down. They have since been collecting damaging material to prise Mr Hamilton from his candi-

day, Central Office briefed journalists that Mr Major wanted Mr Hamilton out. On Sunday this remained the line, but, following the intervention of the rightwing, yesterday morning the message

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## Darling buds of March put spring in the step of Labour's D:Ream team

## Election sketch



Kamal Ahmed

## Pakistan's PM to disarm president

Phil Goodwin in Islamabad

**I**N A revolutionary move for politics in Pakistan, the new prime minister, Nawaz Sharif, announced last night that he was moving to scrap the constitutional provision that gives the president the power to dismiss prime ministers and governments.

The measure has been at the centre of Pakistan's chronic political instability since it was introduced in 1985 by General Zia-ul-Haq at the end of a long period of military rule.

Since then, every president has used the provision, and the last four elected prime ministers have been removed before the end of their terms.

President Farooq Leghari sacked Benazir Bhutto on November 5 last year on disputed charges of corruption and misuse, and dissolved the national assembly. The resulting election on February 3 brought Mr Sharif to power in a landslide.

Mr Sharif made the announcement in a countryside address on state-controlled television and radio after a day of political drama behind the scenes.

Since he was sworn in a month and a half ago, Mr Sharif's relationship with Mr Leghari has been deteriorating. The president had been insisting on a tight grip on policies, and had persuaded Mr Sharif to appoint a number of presidential relatives and friends in key government positions.

It became clear that the

president was determined to be a key player and it was a matter of time before Mr Sharif was sacked.

Mr Sharif was a victim of the eighth amendment to the constitution during his first term of office three years ago, and has vowed not to let it happen again.

He flew to Mr Leghari's home area, Dera Ghazi Khan, and confronted him.

In his address to the country, Mr Sharif said the president had "willingly agreed" to the constitutional changes. In effect, he had no choice.

After his landslide election victory, Mr Sharif has the biggest mandate in the country's history and can easily command the two-thirds majority in both houses of parliament needed to make the change.

"In order to have true democracy in the country we have decided to get rid of the controversial provisions of the eighth amendment," Mr Sharif told the country in his televised address. "You gave me a massive mandate and I will not disappoint you. The controversial parts will be consigned to history."

There was instant reaction from Ms Bhutto, now on the political sidelines. "I accept the gesture of the prime minister in annulling the eighth amendment. If it is properly carried out," she said.

Shortly before Ms Bhutto's dismissal, she appealed to Mr Sharif for a joint effort to repeal the clause. But within a day, Ms Bhutto was swept from power.

Share in the subcontinent, page 6



To the manor born... Tony Blair at the unveiling of Labour's election advertising campaign at Chilton Park Country House Hotel in Kent yesterday

PHOTOGRAPH BY SEAN SMITH

## Advertising consultant Tony Brignull assesses the new slogan

**P**OLITICAL parties feel undressed without a slogan, though when, after discarding hundreds of them, they finally settle on one, they're not often sure what to do with it.

"Stick it on the bottom," is the answer. The bottom of what? The bottom of everything.

So you will be seeing Labour's new slogan "Britain deserves better" at the foot of posters, leaflets—both national and local—and probably the manifesto, too.

As slogans go, it isn't bad. It sums up what people are feeling whether they are right to do so or not. To put your finger on the pulse in three words is quite an achievement.

Hang about, though. The slogan did not come without wrapping. Mr Blair also announced his firm commitment to positive advertising from now on. Each new poster, ad in the press and party political broadcast will make a positive statement for new Labour.

Good on him, you might be thinking, and about time too, but how will positive statements work with the new slogan?

Clearly, "Britain deserves better" would work best under a statement attacking the Tories.

Imagine it under a picture of Mr Major, for example, or better still the entire Cabinet.

Placed under a positive promise for the Labour Party it might look odd, as if it is criticising the very promise which it purports to support.

We will see. Much depends on whether Maurice and Charles Saatchi find a loophole in Labour's defences, as they did last time.

If they do and things get bloody, it will be a test indeed of Mr Blair's resolve.

Tony Brignull is an award-winning copywriter and an advertising consultant.

## Channel 5 cheered by 5.8pc share of peak time

Andrew Culf Media Correspondent

**C**HANNEL 5 claimed yesterday that its opening night ratings had exceeded expectations with a share of 5.8 per cent, putting it ahead of Channel 4, on 4.7.

Unofficial figures revealed 2.3 million viewers tuned in to see the Spice Girls launch Britain's first new terrestrial channel for 15 years.

But its peak-time audience share failed to lure viewers away from ITV and BBC1. Instead, Easter Sunday's opening programmes dented Channel 4 and BBC2.

With Channel 5's signal reaching only half the country, the station's executives said they were delighted with the ratings, while acknowledging launch nights tend to be exceptional. Their first-year target is 5 per cent.

The ITV network's £80 million investment in Formula One motor racing paid dividends, helping deliver a 39.2 per cent peak-time audience share.

Marcus Plantin, ITV's network director, said: "Channel 5 did what any good marketer would do and booked one of the hottest acts in town, but Villeneuve and the boys proved hotter than the Spice Girls."

The Brazilian Grand Prix peaked at 8.2 million on ITV,

with an average of 6.7 million over its 3½ hours.

Channel 5's soap Family Affairs pulled in 1.5 million, while the much-hyped late-night chat show with Jack Docherty attracted 1 million.

The well-received dramatisation of the Stephanie Slater kidnapping, starring Gina McKee, got 1.5 million.

ITV, which uses a different definition of peak-time, put Channel 5 at 4.8 per cent.

Mr Plantin said Channel 5

was presenting a bigger danger to the minor channels.

"All the research gurus have said stations like Channel 5 tend to pick off other small channels. Channel 4 had a bad night and there was some erosion on BBC2, while the two key channels held steady."

It will take weeks for Channel 5's true standing to emerge. Sunday's figures would have been distorted by the warm weather, lighter

evenings and Easter holidays. Anecdotal evidence of difficulties over Channel 5's reception continued yesterday. Most calls to The Magazine, Radio 5 Live's phone-in, concentrated on problems of poor or non-existent picture quality.

Channel 5 said people whose video and satellite equipment was still suffering interference should make a returning appointment on 0500 555265.

## Will these liven me up?

|                                                                                                               |                                                                                                                      |                                                                                                                            |                                                                                                                     |
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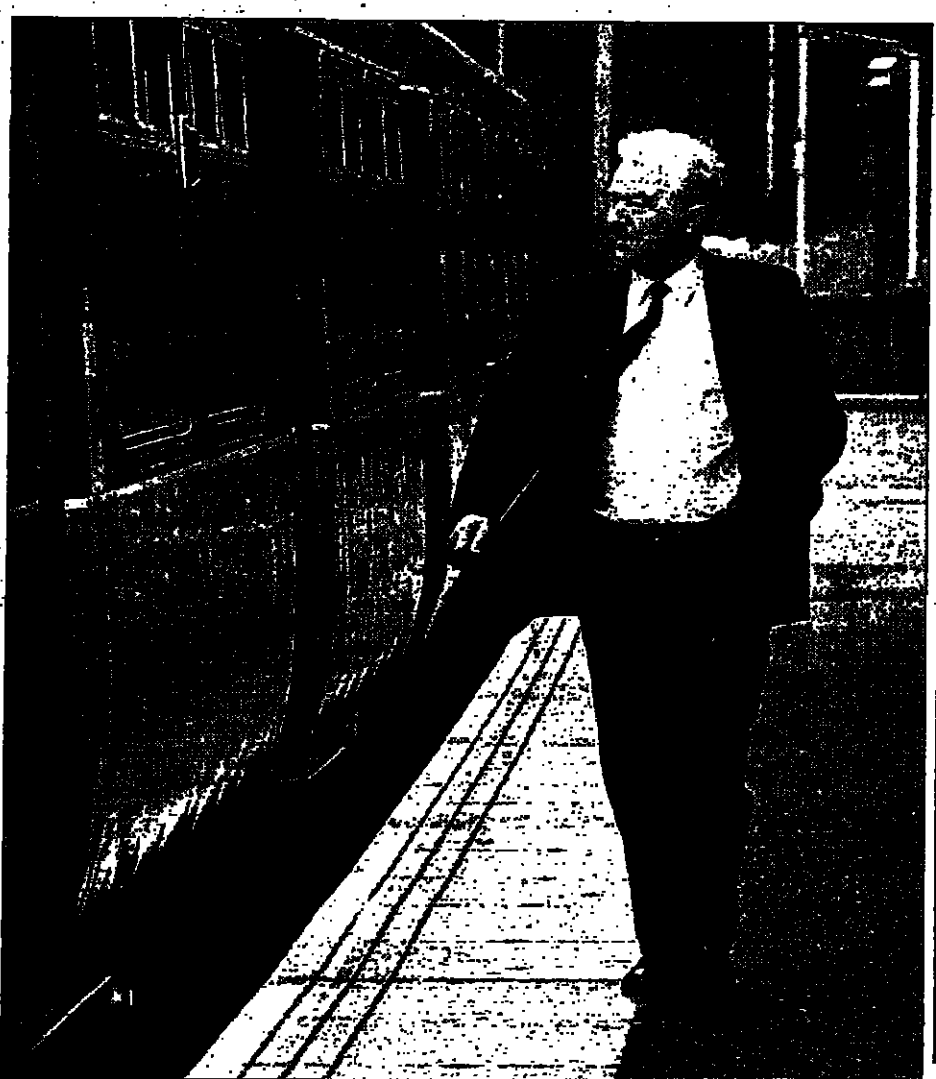
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The romance of BR's past exists now only as nostalgia (above), while John Bowden (below) prepares to take the last journey by British Rail. PHOTOGRAPHS: ROGER BAMBER (above) and CHRIS MCCANN

# First and final BR man sees off its last train

The state-owned railway has rolled into history. Lawrence Donegan was aboard



## Timetable

- January 1, 1948: BR formed from four private companies - the London Midland and Scottish Railway, the Great Western Railway, the London and North Eastern Railway, and the Southern Railway.
- 1962: British Railways Board set up to run the industry.
- 1963 and 1965: Beeching reports published which led to route miles being reduced by a third.
- BR network once covered more than 10,000 miles, 40,000 bridges, viaducts and tunnels, and 9,000 level crossings. It owned 2,500 stations and 90 maintenance depots.
- At its peak, BR employed 250,000. There were 100,000 employees at the time of its break-up.
- April 1994: BR's track and signalling transferred to Railtrack.
- May 1996: Railtrack sold off for £1.9 billion.
- April 1 1997: The last BR train to reach its destination will be the Fort William sleeper from London arriving at 10.30am today.

JOHN Bowden was overwhelmed at becoming a national treasure he hid his excitement well. "It's just a job," he said, settling into his seat behind the window of a nationalised Blairhill railway station ticket office for the last time.

With those four softly-spoken words, the 64-year-old grandfather marked his own entry into the history books and the end of a post-war era.

British Rail was signed out of existence last night when ScotRail, the last of the 25 BR passenger franchises put up for sale by the Government, was handed

over to the bus group, National Express, just before midnight. Hundreds of rail enthusiasts were on board as the last nationalised passenger train left Glasgow for Edinburgh.

For the Government the moment of departure was a triumph of privatisation. For those opposed to the sell-off, it was the last act of free market butchery. It made Mr Bowden the only man to work for the nationalised railway from the moment it was founded on January 1, 1947, until its demise yesterday.

Mr Bowden joined the then privately-owned London and North East Rail-

ways as a store boy in 1947, a year before the network was nationalised by the Attlee government. Over the years he worked as a bolt cleaner and wagon examiner. He has sold tickets at Blairhill station, near Coatbridge, for three years.

"It didn't make much difference when British Rail was nationalised. I only hope privatisation won't make much difference either. The biggest change since 1948 has been in the stations, which used to be filthy because of the steam trains. British Rail has been teased a lot over the years, but if you ask me it has been a pretty good service which people have appreciated," he said as he received a plaque marking his achievement from ScotRail's managing director, John Ellis.

Despite the endless jokes about leaving on the line, rotten sandwiches and the wrong kind of snow, there are many who would agree with him.

Immediately after nationalisation much was done to replace old rolling stock, and improve the condition of main lines to cut journey times. With the setting up of the British Railways Board in 1962 and the Beeching cuts a year later, the industry started the

cultural change that transformed it from a public service carrier of diminishing importance to a modern business. This process was completed in 1992, when BR was widely recognised as the most cost-effective railway in Europe. Its approach of management by business sector, rather than by geographical division, was taken up by other railway administrations throughout the world.

Compared with BR's first results in 1963, there has been little change in the passenger business, although there has been a one-third reduction in the size of the network. Passenger miles and train miles were broadly similar, though the business was operated with a stock of carriages only one-third the size it was in 1963. It dropped from 31,598 in that year to 11,922 in 1994, reflecting more productive use of the fleet.

Most observers argue that BR had become more efficient, more customer conscious and more ready to respond to each competition. In its final year it received £1 billion in state aid, somewhat modest compared with almost £2 billion currently being handed out to the private sector to run the railways.

It now seems that it was not the Thatcher anti-union legislation that pulled the teeth of the industrial sector, nor even the terrible example of the defeat of the steel workers and the miners. It is home ownership. Linda Grant

G2 page 5

## Rebel victory deals heavy blow to Mobutu

Key garrison town falls without fight on eve of Zaire peace talks

Chris McGreal in Lubumbashi

ZAIREAN rebels delivered another major blow to the government yesterday by seizing a key garrison town ahead of peace talks scheduled to begin in South Africa this week.

The fall of Kamina, in the southern province of Shaba, is the most severe loss for President Mobutu Sese Seko's regime since rebels took the northern capital of Kisangani a fortnight ago.

The government is now threatened with the total collapse of its forces in Shaba, where, even before the rebels arrived, the Zairean army was fleeing local uprisings. The region's paramilitary gendarmes have said they will defect to the insurgents.

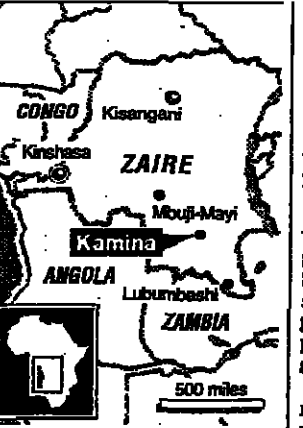
The rebel Alliance of Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Congo-Zaire may be seeking new victories to strengthen its hand in preliminary

talks with Mr Mobutu's regime. But the alliance is playing down expectations of an early end to the war, insisting that negotiations can only be held with Mr Mobutu or his personal envoy, a condition Zaire's president has yet to agree to publicly.

Kamina is a key military and air base at the hub of a road and rail network linking Shaba's capital, Lubumbashi, with the strategic diamond mining town of Mbuji-Mayi. As Kamina is midway between the two cities, it positions the rebels to take either or both at their leisure.

The loss of Kamina also cuts off the means of escape for government troops in Lubumbashi, leaving them the choice of surrender or fleeing into Angola or Zambia when the rebels finally arrive.

There was no resistance by the tiny force of 150 soldiers left to defend the garrison town after the bulk of government troops withdrew. In what has become the pattern



for rebel assaults, infiltrators entered the city to spread word that the insurgents were on their way, to set government soldiers fleeing.

A local traditional chief put together a welcoming committee to greet the rebels on the edge of town, while, true to form, the army sought a means of escape.

Officers commandeered a train and two small track maintenance vehicles to hot down the railway line. Ordinary soldiers seized any vehicles to hand for their getaway, and beat up some nuns who were not quick enough to hand theirs over. But they had little chance for the full-scale looting which has become a common ingredient of Zairean army retreats.

The rebels entered Kamina at 2am after walking more than 100 miles along the railway line from the east. A few hours later an unsuspecting passenger train rolled in from the north, presenting the insurgents with a valuable new means of moving troops across hundreds of miles of eastern Zaire.

The rebels are meeting little resistance as they probe

deeper into Shaba, and in some villages and towns the populations are turning on the old order even before the rebels arrive. Bands of young men, some organised under the banner of regional political parties, have attacked soldiers in several places. Government troops fought against a local uprising in Kasenga, leaving several dead and wounded before the army fled. In Idings, about 80 miles north of Lubumbashi, soldiers murdered at least three young men for sporting white headbands - a symbol of solidarity with the rebels.

Villagers in Malemba-Nkulu threw their local pro-Mobutu chief into a crocodile-infested river. Other village chiefs appointed by the government have resigned in the hope of saving their skins.

In Lubumbashi, officers of the paramilitary Katangan gendarmes - a holdover from Shaba's various secessionist struggles - are barely disguising their intent to support the rebels at the first sign of their approach.

"We have arms and are ready to fight for the rebels," one commander said. "Lubumbashi will fall. I don't think there will be any resistance. The government troops don't want to fight because they're divided, and if they do we will fight with the rebels, so the army will be outnumbered."

The main military base in Lubumbashi appears largely deserted. The provincial governor says special units of the presidential guard, dispatched through the city, are there to prevent a breakdown of order and looting as much as to defend Shaba's capital.



Good news and bad... estate agents' windows are full but 1990s snags may be back  
PHOTOGRAPH BY ANDY BLACKMORE

Surveys point to return of North-South divide as homes market, particularly in Greater London, makes up ground lost in recession, writes Peter Hetherington



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# Going, going, gazumped

**T**HE GREAT North-South house price divide, which disappeared in the recession of the late 90s, is returning with a vengeance, according to building society surveys.

Fuelled by growing business confidence in the South-east, falling unemployment and rising wage levels, the rise in prices has analysts reporting a return of that old bogey gazumping, particularly in Greater London.

With demand far outstripping supply in the South-east, which is what some economists describe as "overheating", many sellers are playing the market.

They agree a price with a potential buyer, then pull the

plug when someone offers a better deal.

Birmingham Midshires building society reported yesterday that seven out of 10 estate agents were experiencing gazumping problems. "It is causing a real headache in London," said a spokesman.

Mike Jackson, the society's chief executive, went so far as to claim that confidence was at an all-time high. But "we cannot escape the fact that there is still a shortage of properties. Demand for some far outstrips supply."

Based on a sample survey of agents by pollsters ICM, Birmingham Midshires said house prices were on course to rise by 10 per cent or more in Greater London this year. Agents in Scotland were the

least optimistic, predicting only a 2.5 per cent increase.

Figures from the Halifax, the largest mortgage lender, showed that prices rose by 15 per cent in Greater London last year, while the northern region (Tyne and Wear, Northumberland, Durham, Teesside and Cumbria) reported only a 4 per cent increase. Overall, prices were up by 8.5 per cent around Britain.

Yet three years ago, with thousands of southern households locked into negative equity — where a mortgage exceeds the value of a house — and house repossession approaching an all-time high, the North appeared marginally better off than the South. Then prices in Greater Lon-

don dropped by 0.6 per cent in a year, whereas in the North they stayed relatively stable.

In 1993 unemployment in the North and the South-east was around the same level, at 10 to 12 per cent. Now, while almost 10 per cent of the working population are officially still jobless in the North, the figure in the South-east is only 6 per cent.

Wage levels are also widening. On the last full analysis, due to be updated shortly, average gross weekly earnings were £437.50 in the South-east and only £331.70 in the North.

Keith Burge, who heads an economic research agency in Newcastle upon Tyne, said: "There is now a much more limited supply of decent-quality housing in the overheated

South-east. In the late 1980s we caught up with the South because they were falling behind, not because we were surging ahead. Once the economy started to recover, the gap started to widen again."

But the building societies have their critics. Sir Lawrie Barratt, chairman of one of the largest housebuilders, maintained that prices were rising at a more modest level — 4 per cent last year, or half that claimed by the Halifax.

Even so, Barratt has produced results showing it built a record 3,362 houses in the last six months of 1996, worth a record £275 million. Half-year profits have jumped by 30 per cent. Five years ago it had to write off more than £100 million, and Sir Lawrie

came out of retirement to rescue the company he founded.

Yesterday, estate agents around the country were reporting a surge in demand for houses. David Mills, a regional director of an agency with 140 branches in the North and Midlands, said: "The property train is rolling and it is going to be difficult to bring it to a halt. The ripple from the South is beginning to hit us."

In his company alone, turnover was up by 70 per cent over last year. "But no one wants to see a return to the crazy days when prices rose by £10,000 a week in some cases," he said. "We don't want a boom followed by a very large bust."

### South

**'Nothing to buy even if you could afford it'**

**L**OOKING for a house in London can be a thankless task. Ask Jane, a 28-year-old first time buyer who has spent 18 months searching for a one bedroom flat in the Kentish Town area.

In that time she has seen prices increase by between 20 and 25 per cent and the market become so competitive that most good places are sold the first day they

become available. "Eighteen months ago, estate agents would ring you back if you were serious about buying a house," she said. "Now they wouldn't even consider ringing you. They have so many buyers on their books they would laugh at you if you asked them to ring you. You have to ring at least once or twice a week to make sure they prioritise you."

She said that some estate agents compile priority lists for people who already have mortgages set up. "You become a VIP, although they still never call you back. It's almost like they can choose who they sell a property to."

She added: "There are a ridiculous number of people trying to buy, and there is hardly anything on

the market. The result is you can't have any indecision whatsoever. If you are a careful person it's difficult to put down £20,000 on a one-bedroom flat without blinking."

During her hunt Jane has had three offers but all have fallen through. "I was gazumped and another time she lost out in a bidding war. It's terribly depressing because in the time that I have been looking, prices have gone up by a quarter."

She added: "The price rise is causing bottlenecks because homeowners have read in the papers that prices are going up and up, so they are now holding on to their properties. There's nothing to buy even if you could afford it."

— Alex Bellis

### North

**'I just don't think prices are rising as agents claim'**

**T**HE MARKET might be buoyant again in the North, but Bill Turner knows to his cost that prices have yet to take off — whatever the mortgage lenders claim.

He put his four-bedroom detached house on the market for £199,950. Set in half an acre on the well-heeled Darras Hall estate, north of Newcastle, it is what the agents call "much sought after". Houses in this quarter of the North-east, nick-

named Henley-on-Tyne, change hands quickly.

But Bill, an independent financial consultant, soon had to drop his price by over 7 per cent. With a grown-up family, he had intended to "trade down" to a bungalow. There had been plenty in January, but they were all snapped up. So he opted for a three-bed converted barn nearby, asking price £185,000. He offered £155,000 — and was lucky. "I wanted to pay off my mortgage but, in the end, I still have one," he said. "I just don't think prices are rising as the estate agents claim. If they are, it's very minimal. But houses are moving. Five were up for sale on our road, and there are all gone."

Demand in the North-east has been helped by a wave of overseas investment — particularly the German elec-

tronics giant, Siemens, which is opening a £1.5 billion microchip plant on Tyneside, which will create 1,500 jobs. Young executives from the South, and from Germany, are trickling North.

A friend of Bill Turner asked £180,000 for his house on Darras Hall. In the end, it went for £145,000 — to a Siemens manager. Elsewhere on Tyneside, house building is continuing apace — which is why, for the time being, supply is matching demand.

— Peter Hetherington

## GPs' appeal cuts non-urgent Easter calls

Kate Watson-Smyth on one surgery's campaign to curb 'ludicrous' requests

**A** CAMPAIGN to persuade people not to call GPs out over the Easter holiday except for emergencies or serious illness was a success, according to one doctor who kept a diary of calls over the four day holiday.

David Moor, who works for a co-operative of 43 doctors caring for 72,000 patients in

Newcastle upon Tyne, said that although the surgery had been busy there were significantly fewer unnecessary or inappropriate calls than expected.

However, among them was a call-out for sleeping pills to counter the effects of a neighbour's noisy party, one to mend a Zimmer frame and

four for morning-after pills to prevent pregnancy.

From Friday morning until Monday evening, Dr Moor noted all the calls he received and those of his colleagues. By 8pm on Monday the co-op had seen 297 patients, most of whom were genuine cases.

"There are always some ludicrous calls, and there are always people who forget to renew their prescriptions, but on the whole the message has got through and people have not been wasting anyone's time," Dr Moor said.

He stressed that the campaign was not to prevent people from calling out their doctors but to persuade them to ring for advice first.

Of the 297 patients, 11 had forgotten to stock up on their medication, two of whom were drug addicts who could not be given large prescriptions — and five were drunks.

Among the 22 "inappropriate" calls was the one from the woman who wanted sleeping pills to overcome the next-door noise, and one from a 42-year-old man who complained



David Moor: 'I learned to control my temper'

that he had been tired for four days. Another concerned a little boy who had eaten a small piece of soap.

Dr Moor said he was accustomed to this type of request, and only mildly put out by the woman who wanted paracetamol delivered to her because the chemist was closed.

"I have learned to control my temper these days," he said of the call from an el-

derly lady asking him to fix her Zimmer frame. "As a young doctor it can drive you scatty dealing with these sort of calls, but now I tend to be amused by them — even when they become stropky, which they often do."

Dr Moor said 49 per cent of the calls had been dealt with over the telephone. "Sometimes we send transport to bring them to the centre, or they may need to go straight to casualty. If they need a prescription we can ring it through to a chemist near them so they don't have to go far to pick it up."

He believed that the Patients' Association's fear that the campaign would make the elderly worried about calling the doctor was unfounded. "About 25 per cent of calls were from people aged over 65, and we have no evidence that people have been flooding into casualty wards, which was the other fear," he said.

"For the most part people have been very sensible, and the campaign has worked very well."

### News in brief

## First Ulster march passes peacefully

**T**HE first of several disputed parades in Ulster's annual marching season passed off yesterday without incident despite complaints by some loyalists that members of the Apprentice Boys of Derry had given in to the IRA by agreeing not to march through a mainly Catholic section of the Lower Ormeau Road in south Belfast.

Police had cordoned off the Ormeau Bridge as a precaution but the procession of 30 bandmen and 20 Apprentice Boys turned left on to the Ormeau Embankment before travelling by bus to a big demonstration in Killybegs, Co Down. Tommy Cheevers of the Apprentice Boys said he hoped the decision would set the tone for a peaceful marching season. At the same march last year there were violent clashes and petrol bombing.

Negotiations are going on to try to agree compromises in Dunloy, Co Antrim, Bellaghy, Co Londonderry, and also Drumcree, Co Armagh, where last year the RUC backed down under the threat of violence and allow Orangemen to march down the mainly Catholic Garvaghy Road in Portadown.

## Swampy to stand as MP

**SWAMPY**, the anti-roads campaigner, yesterday abseiled down a cliff on the site of the proposed second runway at Manchester airport and announced he would be standing in the general election for the Never Mind The Ballots Party at Blackley, north Manchester. At his tunnel dug under the site, Swampy launched his 10-point "Don't fly, don't drive" manifesto, and said: "I want to put environmental issues first. I'm standing against Graham Stringer, the Labour party candidate, who is chair of Manchester Airport plc."

Swampy, the 23-year-old activist whose real name is Daniel Hooper, was the last to emerge from tunnels dug under the A30 in Devon. Last month he was arrested for allegedly damaging a fence on the site and will appear in court in April.

## Priest charged with trespass

**A** CATHOLIC priest was among eight people charged with trespass under the Civil Aviation Act yesterday during an Easter protest against the alleged sale of jets to Indonesia for use against the people of East Timor.

Father Arthur Fitzgerald, of St Michael's church in Liverpool, was arrested as he held an Easter liturgy with parishioners and East Timor refugees inside the British Aerospace Hawk Jet factory at Warton, Lancashire. The party of eight protesters formed a "human stapler" to climb the fence to mark the start of a day of action at the base.

## Hope for oil-spill beach

**E**NVIRONMENTAL experts expressed confidence yesterday that oil washed ashore from a cargo ship wrecked on rocks at Porth Hellick bay, a site of special scientific interest on the main Scilly island of St Mary's, would cause little coastal damage. The director of the islands' environmental trust, Andrew Gibson, said there would be a short term loss of marine life.

The tug Salvage Chief continued pumping around 90 tonnes of fuel oil from the Antiguan-registered Ciba, which went aground in gales last week. Oiled sand will be removed by mechanical diggers, cleaned and returned to the beach, and rocks in the bay will be washed clean of oil.

## Glasgow axes Mr Happy

**G**LASGOW council, which recently pushed through £80 million of spending cuts, has been forced to erase the Mr Happy cartoon character which helped re-build the city's image because it cannot afford the annual copyright fees of £28,000 for the logo and its caption Glasgow's Miles Better. Inspired by America's I Love NY campaign, the Roger Hargreaves figure appeared on everything from buses to council notepaper and has been credited with helping Glasgow claim the title European City of Culture 1990.

— Eiridun Clouston

## Divers suffer from 'bends'

**T**HREE members of a diving club in Folkestone, Kent, who are thought to have suffered from the "bends" at a depth of 33 metres off the Kent coast were yesterday said to be doing well at a special medical unit in Belgium.

They were airlifted to a decompression chamber in Ostend after being brought from the sea near Dover, a spokesman for the Dover coastguard said. One was said to be unconscious while the other two had been taken to the medical unit as a precaution.

## Bishop recommends Koran

**T**HE BISHOP of Jarrow who gave up the Bible for Lent to read the Koran said he found the Muslim holy book like "gazing at a very beautiful tapestry". The Right Reverend Alan Smithson said: "It has been a very good six weeks for me. I found the Koran a fascinating book. In the Koran you are brought back to recurring themes, the reader is always being recalled to the fundamentals. I found a lot of resonances with the Bible, themes like the compassion and mercy of God run through the Koran as well."

## Mother battered to death

**D**ETECTIVES were yesterday hunting the killer of the mother of two young children who was found battered to death in an attic bedroom at her home in Brighton. Deborah Thomas, 37, a poet, had severe head injuries caused by a blunt object. Her two children, a boy aged 10 and a girl aged five, were away at the time with relatives.

Derek Malcolm reviews the latest film releases

every Friday in

The Guardian

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Canon

Matthew Engel begins the Guardian review of individual constituencies with a look at one of Scotland's least known and least predictable seats

## Wild and mysterious . . . and that's just the candidates in four-way fight to take bonny Glenclyde

THE Boundary Commissioners who decide the names of constituencies in Scotland normally have a poetic cast of mind. They make places sound wild and mysterious. There is Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale (Sir David Steel's old seat); Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley; Galloway and Upper Nithsdale.

And then there is Glenclyde North. No border reivers plundered here, and if the clansmen battled over the land, they probably gave up and went home. It is a flat part of Scotland, north of the big cities, south of the Highlands: dormitory towns that never wake up and villages that travellers pass by.

The constituency has been so redistributed that even the experts are baffled as to its electoral form. The Political Research Unit at the University of Dundee says it could even be a four-way marginal, whose fortunes could depend not merely on the national swing but on how voters react to the candidates.

Hamish McHenry, Labour's man, told the local party when he was chosen that he did not think the electorate were interested in either listening to speeches or being disturbed while watching football.

So when he goes round the streets and parish halls of Glenclyde he gives a brief political intro then gets out his guitar, and plays in the style known as Highland Bluegrass.

Oh, I'm a Blairite, can't you see? New Labour's the party for me . . . Hamish McHenry with his guitar version of the manifesto

Oh, I'm a Blairite, can't you see? New Labour's the party for me . . . Hamish McHenry with his guitar version of the manifesto

Oh, I'm a Blairite, can't you see? New Labour's the party for me . . . Hamish McHenry with his guitar version of the manifesto

## Two youths killed on city rail line

Martin Walker

TRANSPORT police issued fresh warnings yesterday about the "lethal playground" created by modern, fast and quiet trains, after two teenagers were killed on an urban stretch of line notoriously frequented by teenage gangs.

The boys, aged 17 and 15, were hit by a 50mph express between Cross Gates and Leeds City stations, an area which has been the subject of repeated appeals for children to keep off the lines.

## Death by the camp fire

Two young Scout leaders were crushed by a sudden fall of rock. Alison Daniels reports

SCOUT leader whose two young colleagues were crushed to death yesterday described how boulders fell on his friends without warning, giving them no chance to move or speak before they died.

Marcus Hill, aged 25, who narrowly escaped from the rock fall, said he and lifelong scouting enthusiasts Stuart Perkins, aged 20, and David Weaver, aged 21, had been relaxing with a few cans of beer round the camp fire at the base of a rock-face at midnight on Sunday, partway through a holiday weekend expedition.

Without warning the rocks fell on us. They didn't even have time to move or say anything.



Tape seals off the site of the camp fire where rocks collapsed and killed two scout leaders enjoying a drink after a sing-song with their charges



Stuart Perkins, left, and David Weaver, centre, died; Marcus Hill, right, survived

"Without warning the rocks fell on us. They didn't have time to move or say anything. We were talking about television, cars and life in general and it was very sudden, the rocks just fell in"

Marcus Hill

## 6 WORLD NEWS

### News in brief

#### Albania mourns 83 sea collision victims

ALBANIA paused at midday yesterday to mourn the 83 people killed after their Russian-built vessel sank in a collision with an Italian naval ship on Friday. Many of the 34 survivors accuse the Italian navy of ramming their vessel to stem the flood of refugees. Four bodies have so far been found. Italy's navy denies it was to blame. Rome pushed ahead with plans for a multinational force of 2,500 to protect aid to Albania. A further 2,500 personnel are to be in reserve. Athens said it would contribute about 700 soldiers, and Romania said it would send 400. — *Reuters, Tirana.*

#### Yeltsin seeks Belarus union

PRESIDENT Boris Yeltsin of Russia gave the green light yesterday to a draft treaty on union with Belarus, despite liberals' fears that it would sign away some of his powers to a hardliner. Mr Yeltsin's foreign affairs adviser, Dmitry Ryukov, told Inter-Tass news agency that the president had "on the whole approved the draft" of a document to be signed tomorrow with the president of Belarus, Alexander Lukashenko. But he said the agreement could be amended before tomorrow. A draft of the treaty appeared to provide for a union of independent states that closely co-ordinated foreign, economic and military policies. — *Reuters, Moscow.*

#### Yemeni faces firing squad

A YEMENI gunman was condemned yesterday to death by firing squad for killing a headmistress, a teacher and three children in an attack at two schools in the Yemeni capital Sana'a on Sunday. Three other children are critically ill in hospital. Mohammed Ahmad Misseh opened fire with an assault rifle on hundreds of pupils aged between six and 18 at two neighbouring schools in a Sana'a suburb. He said he had meant to kill the husband of the headteacher, alleging the couple had approved the kidnapping and rape of his eight-year-old daughter 18 months ago, after a land dispute. But a medical report said the girl was still a virgin and had not been raped. The prosecutor-general said the condemned man's appeal would be heard today. — *Reuters, Sana'a.*

#### Le Pen followers held

FOUR members of France's far-right National Front were detained yesterday for posing as policemen and arresting two anti-Front protesters in Strasbourg, a state prosecutor said. Edmond Stenger said the four would go on trial today for "making illegal arrests and wrongfully assuming the functions of officers in the criminal police", a charge that carries up to five years in prison. One Front member was named as Claude Jaffres, an elected local councillor in the Fuy-de-Dome region. The other three belong to the party's security services. Thirteen people detained in clashes with police on Saturday after a protest march against the Front's congress also face trial. — *Reuters, Strasbourg.*

#### McVeigh jury assembles

TIGHT security surrounded the federal court complex in Denver yesterday where jury selection began for the trial of the Gulf war veteran Timothy McVeigh, accused of blowing up a federal building in Oklahoma City on April 19 1995. Nineteen children were among the dead. Notices were sent to 1,000 prospective jurors in Denver and 22 surrounding counties, the largest potential pool of jurors in Colorado history. Prosecutors will argue that Mr McVeigh and his alleged accomplice, Terry Nichols, harboured anti-government sentiment after an attack by federal agents on the Branch Davidian compound at Waco, Texas led to the deaths of about 80 people on April 19 1993, exactly two years before the Oklahoma blast. — *Reuters, Denver.*

#### US picks Nato commander

PRESIDENT Bill Clinton has chosen the United States army general Wesley Clark as commander of Nato forces in Europe and of US forces in Europe, a senior Pentagon official said yesterday. Gen Clark, aged 52, speaks Russian and was a key member of the US team that helped broker the 1995 Dayton peace accords on Bosnia. He would replace the retiring General George Joulwan. Gen Clark, a former Rhodes scholar at Oxford, is expected to be approved by other Nato countries. — *Reuters, Washington.*

#### S Korea eases rice ban

SOUTH KOREA will lift a ban on civilian shipments of rice to North Korea to promote peace talks, Seoul said yesterday. But large-scale government shipments of rice will remain banned until North Korea enters peace talks with Seoul, said Kang Ho-yang, the spokesman for Seoul's Unification Board, which handles North Korean affairs. — *AP, Seoul.*

#### Children survive walkabout

SIX children trekked 37 miles in two days through the Australian outback to get help for seven more children and a woman stranded in a broken-down estate car, police said yesterday. Wanda Schultz, aged 27, had taken her five children, their cousins and friends foraging for the Aboriginal food of bardi grubs. Neither the children, aged between seven months and 16 years, nor Ms Schultz were suffering from exposure or dehydration, a hospital spokeswoman said. — *AP, Perth.*

# Shame in the subcontinent

## Death knell for Indian coalition

Suzanne Goldenberg  
in New Delhi

THE Indian president, Shankar Dayal Sharma, sounded the death knell of H. D. Deve Gowda's government yesterday, giving the prime minister 11 days to show that his shaky alliance can still command a majority in parliament despite its betrayal by the Congress party. The president's verdict, delivered in a one-line communiqué, was aimed at containing the political free-for-all that is bound to follow the party's withdrawal of support for the 13-party coalition on Sunday. The Congress was not in the alliance, though its support was vital. Few now expect — or want — fresh elections. Mr Gowda's government was installed barely nine months ago, after weeks of behind-the-scenes political machinations. The prospect of more of the same before the April 11 confidence vote has caused

widespread disgust among Indians, who were, in any event, greatly disenchanted with their elected leaders. "Looking ahead, as yet another shameful political act unfolds in the coming week, is a depressing thought," the Indian Express said in a front page editorial. Like other newspaper leader comments, it was scathing about the Congress party president, the el-

'Looking ahead, as yet another shameful act unfolds, is a depressing thought'

derly Sitaram Kesri, who told the president he was pulling the plug on the Gowda government before informing his party colleagues. "Nobody, not even Sitaram Kesri's quartet of dotting Pomeranians, would take his self-serving indictment of Gowda... seriously," the Express said. "The time and manner in which it has been done, with a landmark budget awaiting

parliamentary approval and the Pakistan foreign secretary in the capital, is shocking and would further strengthen the anti-politician and, sadly even anti-system (anti-democratic) mood in a country held to ransom by politicians bankrupt of ideas or ideology."

The resulting confusion has already taken its toll. The foreign minister, I. K. Gujral, accused Mr Kesri yesterday of sabotaging the first official talks for three years between Pakistani and Indian civil servants, at the weekend. His representative at the talks, the foreign secretary Salman Haider, was more circumspect. Although it was

unclear whether either side had budged during 12 hours of discussions on the disputed territory of Kashmir, Mr Haider insisted that the talks had not become a non-event. But he admitted that some issues would need to be examined "at higher levels, where the process of decision making is more available". At present there is no clear political authority in India. While Mr Gowda and Mr

Kesri seem the obvious contenders, the coming days may throw up a new leader, from Mr Gowda's United Front alliance or the Congress.

The rightwing Hindu Bharatiya Janata Party, although the largest party in parliament, has said it will not try to form a government.

Although Mr Gowda said he would not stand down and that his alliance was "standing together like a rock", his survival is unlikely.

The Congress, which managed to claw its way back by toppling coalitions in its two previous periods out of power since independence 50 years ago, has again presented itself as the natural successor. But it is uncertain whether it can muster the support it needs in parliament.

Mr Kesri's political gamble, which appears to have been driven by his personal ambition, has severely discomfited members of his own party.

But the party's spokesman, V. N. Gadgil, was confident that Mr Kesri would be able to win over MPs from other parties to form a government. "How many times has a decision been taken and then the party executive called? We don't go by textbook democracy," he said. "They will all fall into line."

GZ front

## Pakistan 'fails to curb abuse'

Kathy Gannon  
in Islamabad

MILITANTS in Pakistan have massacred enemies bowed in prayer in their places of worship, men have murdered women in the name of honour, and officials have tortured prisoners to extract confessions, a human rights group said yesterday.

Highlighting the failure of successive governments to curb such abuses, the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan reported that:

□ In the past year, 350 people were killed and 450 seriously wounded in religiously motivated violence. Bombs were planted in mosques, hand grenades thrown at worshippers bowed in prayer, and bullets fired at religious leaders.

□ Of the estimated 100,000 religious schools operating in Pakistan, at least 2,500 were considered "nurseries

of militant sectarianism" receiving foreign funds. □ More than 300 women were killed to avenge an insult or to protect the honour of the family. On average, a female was raped every three hours last year, nearly half of them were children.

□ Two-thirds of women and three-quarters of all men are illiterate.

"This is a very, very sorry state of affairs," the chairman of the commission, Asma Jahangir, said. "We don't seem to be getting on track," she said. "We will not be able to redress the problems until we adhere to some form of political system."

But the commission found that killings and extortions, once rampant in Pakistan's largest city, Karachi, were down. And the judiciary began to assert its independence last year, refusing to rubber-stamp the actions of either the president or the prime minister. — *AP.*

## Arab boycott will harm peace, says Netanyahu

Shyam Bhatia  
in Jerusalem

ISRAELI yesterday condemned Arab moves to revive the economic boycott of the Jewish state, and warned that it would damage the Middle East peace process.

Arab foreign ministers meeting at the Arab League in Cairo last night called on member states to freeze relations "until Israel agrees to implement its peace agreements with all Arab states and stops violating the accords". The Palestinian Authority president, Yasser Arafat, said: "I am not asking [the Israelis] for the moon, I am asking for the honest implementation of all what has been agreed upon."

The Arab move is aimed at those countries which have low-level trade ties with Israel. They exclude Egypt and Jordan, the only two Arab countries that have signed peace treaties with Israel.

Israeli hopes of buying natural gas from the emirate of Qatar are now in jeopardy, as are its hopes of upgrading diplomatic relations with Tunisia and Morocco.

The Israeli prime minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, lashed out at Egypt for spearheading the anti-Israel campaign.

"It's a step backwards from peace. We expected Egypt to lead a position to moderate hostile Arab positions, but it took the other route. I don't think this whole attempt to reconstruct the boycott can go anywhere."

Yesterday the Israeli army demolished the West Bank home of Musa Ghannat, the Palestinian bomber who killed himself and three Israelis with a nail studded explosive in a Tel Aviv cafe.

● Egypt has secretly executed an Egyptian businessman convicted of spying for Israel, the weekly Egyptian magazine Al-Ahram al-Arabi disclosed yesterday.



Reform and Conservative Jews brandish broken hearts outside the Knesset yesterday in protest against pending legislation by the ultra-religious parties that would make conversions to Judaism invalid if performed by rabbis outside the ruling Orthodox stream. PHOTOGRAPH BY Eyal Warshawsky

## Grenade attack inquiry denounced as cover-up

Nick Cumming-Bruce  
in Phnom Penh

CAMBODIAN authorities set in motion yesterday what is already seen as a cover-up investigation of the grenade attack on an opposition political leader.

It was the worst act of political violence since the UN-run elections four years ago. At least 16 people have now died as a result of the attack on a demonstration led by Sam Rainsy, including three Cambodian journalists who were standing close to him. The serious nature of many of the injuries makes it likely that more will die.

A woman featured in press photographs sitting dazed with a broken leg later died from loss of blood. The bodyguard who pushed Mr Rainsy to the ground as the first grenade exploded was himself killed. Mr Rainsy's escape, says a Western analyst, was "a miracle".

Phnom Penh hospitals are treating more than 150 people

injured by the four grenades, a high proportion of a crowd initially estimated to number only 150-200. In one hospital three patients are blinded and several more have lost limbs.

The investigation started after the second prime minister, Hun Sen, agreed yesterday to a proposal by the first prime minister, Prince Norodom Ranariddh, that it should be conducted jointly by their respective parties, the royalist Funcinpec and the Cambodian People's Party.

The decision not to leave the investigation to the police, widely seen as dominated by the CPP, is encouraging a human rights worker commented.

But there is little expectation that the investigation will lead to a credible result, in a country where the murder of journalists, and a grenade attack on members of another opposition party 18 months ago after a warning by Mr Hun Sen, have not been solved.

Mr Rainsy said yesterday that he had no illusions what-

soever about the result of the investigation. "Any serious investigation would lead back to Mr Hun Sen himself, so how can you expect a proper resolution?"

Western observers are convinced that the attack, by at least two men, one in a car, was intended to assassinate Mr Rainsy and to kill many sympathisers.

They draw attention to the curious absence of police — normally present at demonstrations — and the proximity to the demonstration of Mr Hun Sen's private security staff, who allowed one man identified as a grenade thrower to escape but blocked attempts to pursue him.

There are fears that any respite in the political battles that spawned Sunday's carnage may be only temporary. The grenade attack was "just the beginning of the violence", a royalist MP, Ahmad Yahya, said yesterday.

He came to the colony last year to work on the roof of a new Convention Centre, the venue for the formal handover ceremony

by British and Chinese dignitaries on June 30.

Yesterday he joined hundreds of other British nationals seeking to prolong the last privilege of empire for another year.

They took a day trip to Macao, the Portuguese enclave on the other side of the Pearl River estuary, and, returning to Hong Kong before the midnight deadline, had their passports stamped for a further 12 months.

Although Britain retains formal control of its last major colony for another 91 days, it is withdrawing the immigration privileges of its nationals early.

The colony's legislature has yet to endorse the changes but posters went up weeks ago announcing bluntly: "The right to land British citizens will be removed on April 1 1997."

The changes do not affect tourists, who still do not need a visa. The most recent figures from the colony's immigra-

tion department show 29,400 Britons resident in Hong Kong at the end of February. This is about 7,000 fewer than at the same time last year.

Most of those remaining seem eager to stay, despite the wind-down of empire and the end of visa-free work. "I couldn't give a monkey's really about the politics. At the end of the day there is going to be work here for a long time," said Mr Ashmore.

Nicole Bayford, a 28-year-old history teacher, is more anxious, worried that her work will change. China has already demanded the revision of history textbooks to purge colonial colouring.

"I'm not sure how much use they will have for people like me," she said.

● Hong Kong launched a radio service yesterday in Mandarin Chinese, the official language of its future rulers in China. Most of Hong Kong's 6.4 million people speak Cantonese.

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## Kitsch squad strikes terror in gnome owners

Alex Duval Smith and Charlotte Pham in Paris

**F**RENCH gnome owners are bracing themselves for a new round of abductions of their diminutive garden guardians after the self-styled Garden Gnome Liberation Front (GLNG) yesterday pledged a springtime offensive against kitsch.

Members of the Normandy-based Front de Libération des Nains de Jardin said they intend to extend their gnome abduction operations to the rest of France, after raids last year in Alençon and Caen allegedly rid the towns' back gardens of the bearded gnomes.

Gnome owners, not content with the GLNG's assurances that plastic toadstools, plaster rabbits and other garden ornaments will be safe, have told French newspapers they want police to step up patrols in areas where the common-

Last summer, after residents of Alençon returned from their holidays to find their gardens entirely gnomelless, gendarmes received anonymous tip-offs directing them to a wood.

There they found the little figures abandoned in groups of seven — allegedly as a tribute to Snow White — and repainted: their breeches had tracksuit stripes, their chests bore Superman logos, their faces were silver and their beards red.

The Alençon gendarmes was unwilling to say yesterday how it would tackle the threat of further gnome-nappings but confirmed that about 20 were removed by the GLNG last year.

Bernard Fourrey of Saint-Germain de Corbeil, near Alençon, lost six of his eight gnomes last July. He said: "I refuse to let the GLNG terrorise me in my own garden. I have bought new gnomes. I put them out in the morning and take them in at night."

Mr Fourrey said he believed the GLNG were "just a bunch of students" and vowed to stand firm.

"Everyone likes my gnomes. They bring a little bit of happiness to passers-by."

He claimed that the GLNG had stolen neighbours' miniature wheelbarrows, rabbits and Snow White statues. The GLNG denied this, maintaining it has "no interest in accessories".

After an GLNG raid last December, one gnome owner, André Cellier from Seine-Saint-Denis, Greater Paris, told *Le Parisien* newspaper: "It's as if someone had taken away one of my children. My wife and I had had that gnome for 20 years."

A 24-year-old member of the GLNG, who also wished to remain anonymous, said: "We repeat gnomes in order to liberate them from the image they are lumbered with — walking around with a little wheelbarrow, etc."

She added that the "liberation ceremonies" for gnomes feature music and fireworks. But she was cautious about the future of the GLNG.

"It is not open to just anyone. They have to be people known to us, who will not betray us to the police."

**'It is our protest, and it has worked. People don't dare put out garden gnomes any more'**

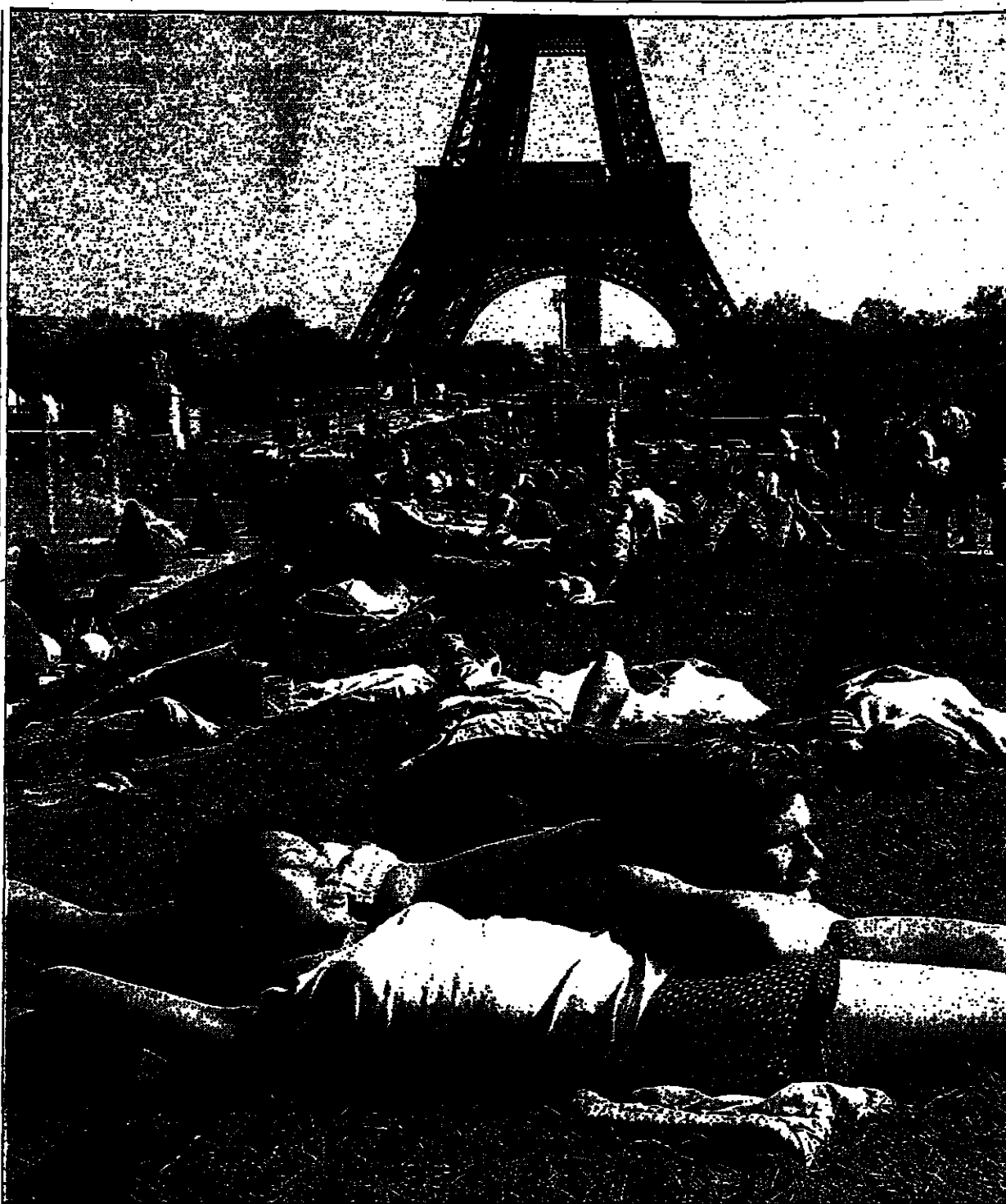
dos are active, including Brittany, the Nice suburbs and Greater Paris.

A spokesman for the year-old GLNG agreed to outline the group's philosophy, provided that he was not named.

The man, aged 20, said: "It is our way of protesting against kitsch, and it has worked. There is not a single gnome on show in Alençon. People don't dare put them out any more."

He believes the GLNG has international potential. "There is real scope in places like Germany and Britain — more so than in France, which has a relatively limited garden gnome population."

Gnome owners who have already been targeted by the GLNG are circumspect. But those willing to come forward say the GLNG is heartless, because it changes the identities of its victims, making them unrecognisable.



Two Dames, Erik Tams and Christina Hansen, laze in the sun near the Eiffel Tower in Paris yesterday as temperatures approached 68°F. A huge sign on the tower will spell off the days to the millennium

## Paris seeks millennial inspiration in Christ's home town

Paul Webster in Paris

**F**RANCE looks set to give Christ a pivotal place in plans for its national millennium celebrations — celebrations which in most Western states seem likely to relegate Jesus to a footnote, despite the fact that the date hinges on his notional birthday.

The 1,000-day countdown begins on Saturday when a huge sign on the Eiffel Tower in Paris, spelling off the days, will be switched on.

While the French events are likely to be largely secular, leaked information about the proposals due to be unveiled tomorrow indicates a project to beam giant Nativity pictures on Notre Dame.

At tomorrow's launch the prime minister, Alain Juppé, will talk by satellite television link with leaders of Nazareth, the holy family's home town.

An exhibition showing France's cultural and scientific influence across the world will be one of the most important contributions, and Paris streets are to be decorated by famous fashion houses.

Overall planning is being directed by Jean-Jacques Aillagon, head of the Pompidou Centre, which is being renovated. He will appeal tomorrow for other suggestions, against a background of criticism that France has woken up to the date later than most other industrial countries.

## Russia forces tax dodgers to cough up

**James Meek** in Moscow on an unexpected reversal of fortune for the revenue

**C**ONFUSION and chaos reigned across 11 time zones yesterday as hordes of Russians fought bureaucratic obstacles in a final attempt to throw off their reputation as a nation of tax-dodgers and settle their accounts with the revenue.

In a country where people commonly accuse the government of stealing their savings by hyperinflation and pyramid schemes, and not paying their salaries, it was a strange sight.

Tax officials, stunned by the queues of people volunteering to beat the April 1 deadline for filing tax returns, struggled to cope with the influx.

Among the model taxpayers cited by the authorities were the former Soviet First Couple Mikhail and Raisa Gorbachev. Their representatives handed in returns worth 1 billion roubles (\$106,000).

The rush to tax offices was only partly due to good citizenship.

The government, desperate for income to pay its debts, has announced draconian penalties for tax evasion, including up to three years in prison.

A series of adverts has underlined the message, alternating pleas for help (pictures of suffering invalids) with threats ("The tax police have guns, and know how to use them").

At tax office number 3 in central Moscow, where the corridors are crowded with tense *businessmen*, sceptical accountants and baffled middle-aged workers, staff said the number of conscientious taxpayers had gone up by half since last year.

All are rouble millionaires: the income tax

threshold in Russia is 12 million roubles (£1,300) a year.

"I don't know if it'll help anyone, but it just seemed like the right thing to do," said Galina, an engineer waiting to hand in her tax form.

"Everyone was afraid of being fined," muttered a woman sitting next to her.

"No, it wasn't fear," said Galina. "We talked about it at work and we decided it'd be a kind of investment — for the teachers, the kindergarten, the schools."

"Of course we're afraid they might spend it on the wrong things, but you have to do something."

Vsevolod Nikolsky, an accountant, sat glumly in the corridor with a fat file of income declarations from the building company where he works. He complained about the burden: 10 different taxes (including 35 per

**'We're afraid they might spend it on the wrong things, but you have to do something'**

cent income and profit tax, 40 per cent payroll tax, and 20 per cent VAT) and contributions to four social funds for each worker.

"You know, the Russian tax system is very stupid," he said. "There's the white market and there's the black market. Those firms who play in the black market don't pay the government anything because the mafia controls everything. And the firms who do pay suffer from this fantastic weight of taxes."

Asked why his company was not in the black market, Mr Nikolsky grew uncertain, as if fearing a trap.

"We're honest people. I don't know. I'm not the boss." He thought for a moment, and grew bolder. "We're an ordinary building company. We don't do anything illegal. So why should we hide our profits?"



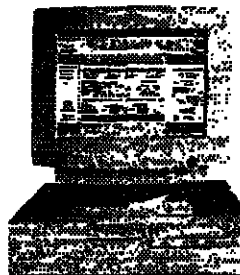
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## Out of education's rut

But teachers need cash as well as consultation

ALL THREE MAIN political parties have pledged to make education their key election issue. But it was not a politician but a teaching union leader who made the best speech in the Easter conference season — best in terms of bravery and vision. Peter Smith, general secretary of the Association of Teachers and Lecturers, called on the profession to stop being so defensive and recognise that standards of education were not rising fast enough. He urged teachers to leave behind some of their "cherished luggage", such as hostility to tests, inspections, and attempts to root out poor practitioners. He bluntly told the profession it would have to change if it wanted to forge a deal with a new government. Teachers would have to accept that their work would be subject to intense public scrutiny. They would need to work to improve tests, rather than oppose them.

If further proof were needed of the accuracy of this diagnosis, Britain's biggest teachers' union provided it on Saturday. True to its recent tradition, the National Union of Teachers remains stuck in the rut of opposition to inspections, tests and league tables. It called on the next Labour government to sack Chris Woodhead, the Chief Inspector of Schools — which will only reinforce Tony Blair's determination to keep him. David Blunkett was equally blunt when he addressed the NUT conference yesterday. It was Mr Blunkett who restored Labour's support for the government's national curriculum and tests, and recognised the need to make higher standards the key target for a future Labour government. Now he reinforced his party's demand for higher levels of literacy by announcing a national effort over the next five years to boost standards of numeracy. He remains unpopular with the extreme left, but many teachers know he is talking common sense.

The NUT's own polls show how out of touch its far left faction is. Just two weeks ago an ICM/NUT poll showed 60 per cent of teachers supporting Labour compared to 21 per cent for the Liberal Democrats and a mere 15 per cent for the Tories. Mr Blunkett's support for tests and the national curriculum only echoes the conclusions of the National Commission on Education which described the two developments in 1993 as among the most encouraging events since the 1944 Butler Education Act. Indeed, an NOP poll for the NUT six years ago found 92 per cent of teachers believing in the government's reforms.

Where teachers have a right to feel aggrieved is the degree to which their profession has been devalued and attacked by successive education ministers. Is it any wonder as the economy has picked up that teacher-training specialists have observed a fall-off in recruitment and forecast a shortfall crisis by the turn of the century? Just as the profession has to face up to its own problems, so ministers should recognise they will only make progress towards their ambitious targets if they carry teachers with them. Imposing change has not worked. Only the conciliatory skills of Sir Ron Dearing saved the government from disaster.

Yet Labour faces a serious problem too. David Blunkett has been bold and brave in his push to raise standards but will be severely hampered in office by Gordon Brown's decision to stick to Conservative spending plans for the first two years. Schools deserve better than this. They face a £3 billion maintenance backlog, rising class sizes and a huge shortfall in their budget for books and equipment. To their credit, recent polls show teachers placing smaller class sizes higher up their priority list than better pay. More consultation with the profession is needed — but so, in the end, is more cash.

## Mowlam gets it moving again

The eventual aim of policy must be talks with Sinn Fein

GETTING the balance right in Northern Ireland has always been a bit like juggling on a high wire, as John Major eventually found out. The status quo is not acceptable, as the recent escalation of paramilitary brinkmanship again shows, but any forward movement on constitutional issues will always risk alienating one community or the other, with potentially very violent consequences. Mr Major's attempt to get out of this historic bind involved a long and sometimes praiseworthy effort. But it failed in the end because the peace process lost balance and because it then lost momentum too. For some months it has been stalled, pending the outcome of the British election.

Momentum is one of the things that a new Labour government could bring to Northern Ireland. Labour would be a fresh player, and would not need to apologise for past failures by Mr Major, real or imagined. With a clean sheet and a working majority, Labour should have both the weight and opportunity to restart the process which Mr Major began, and then to carry it further. It is very important that it does so, even though its timetable will be constrained by the likely general election in the Irish Republic later this year. Whether Labour makes a real impact on the worryingly listless situation in Northern Ireland would depend above all on the general willingness of all parties in Northern Ireland to move forward rather than to slide back, and also upon the specific willingness of the two communities to give peace a chance when potential flashpoints occur. There will be no better time for a new government to start than this summer, and the sensible approach and peaceful outcome of the Apprentice Boys' march in Belfast's Ormeau Road yesterday is an encouraging sign that this view is shared where it matters.

The weekend comments by Labour's shadow Northern Ireland secretary Mo Mowlam about Sinn Fein involvement in all-party talks are the sort of thing that a new incoming secretary of state ought to be saying. Her comments are important because they set a possible date (June 3, when the talks are due to restart anyway) for inclusive meetings involving Sinn Fein. This has caused frissons in some Unionist circles, which is understandable up to a point, in view of recent bombs and snipings, but which is also, as with everything else, said with an eye to the election. But let's be clear about this, because some people seem to have forgotten it: inclusive talks involving Sinn Fein are a desirable objective not an undesirable one. Without Sinn Fein, the prospect of a political alternative to terrorism does not exist. And since everyone wants, or should want, to see Northern Ireland free of terrorism, then the objective of policy must be to bring Sinn Fein in, not keep them out. For that to happen, of course, there must be a ceasefire, for that is the necessary precondition of everything. But this is a start, and a start is what is needed.

## Beached for the last time

An oceanic story with an inevitable ending

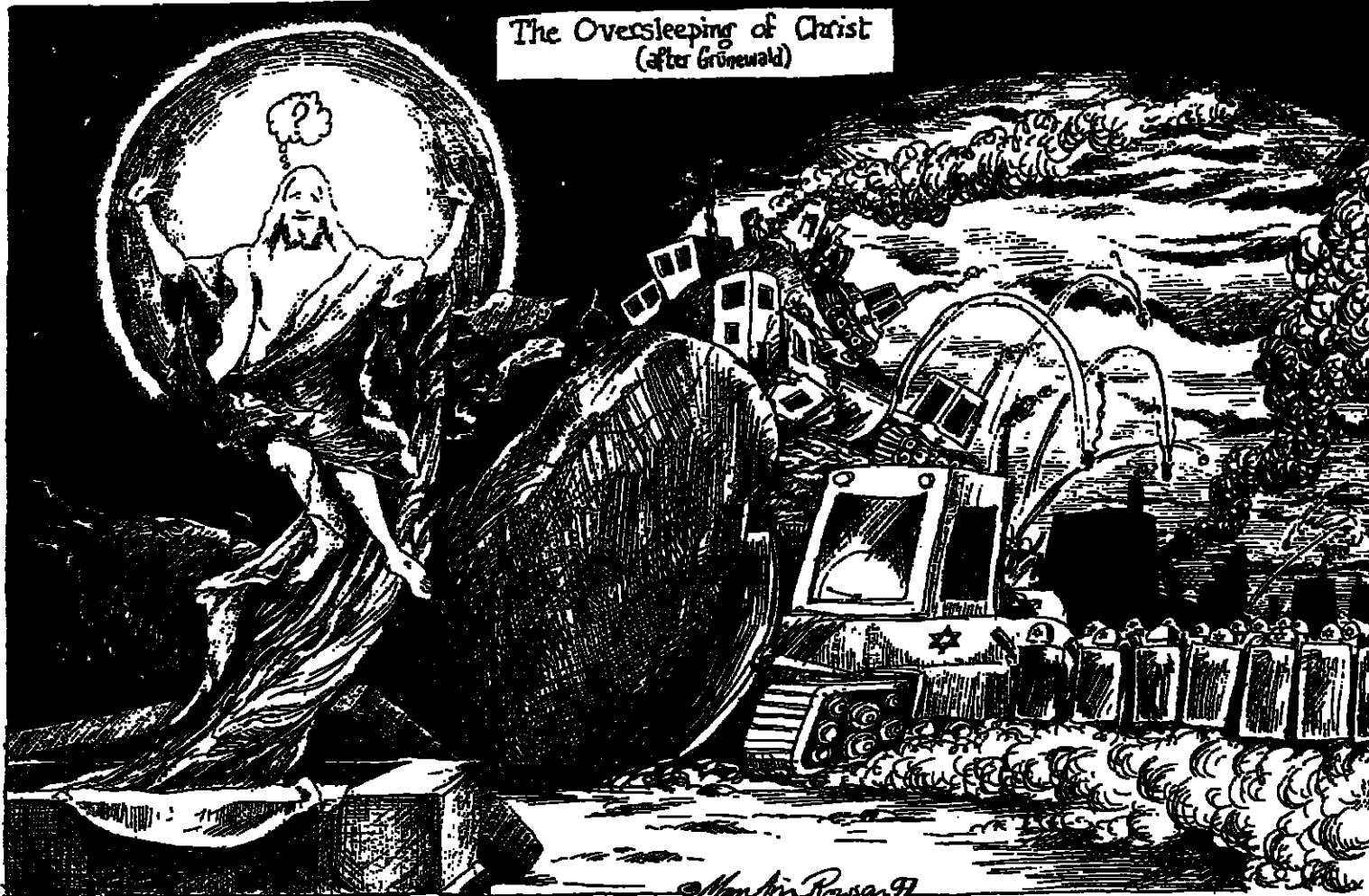
WHALES ARE an important part of the world's maritime environment, and efforts over recent years to save a number of threatened species have been very worthwhile. But seeking to save a single whale in the Firth of Forth is not on the same scale — and as we discovered yesterday, it is bound to finish in tears.

There was a mawkish quality right up to the final moment of the 12 days' saga of Moby the 40-foot sperm whale: never mind that Moby Dick was a white whale. We were assured that he suffocated very quickly after becoming stranded on mudflats, which was "nice" compared to fears that he would linger for up to half a day. We must now await a post mortem which is bound to be futile. For no examination is possible into the delicate navigational mechanism which clearly went wrong on this occasion. Moby was on the wrong side of England and should

never have been in the North Sea. His compass took him up the Firth of Forth because he thought he was heading for the Azores. Unfortunately, the Scottish mainland lay in between.

Anyone living in the country soon learns not to try to save the life of a damaged bird which is unable to take normal self-protective action. The cat will only get it later that evening. The problem is that it is much harder to let a whale die in full view without making some attempt to save it. But time and again, efforts to save beached whales will fail: they would not be on the beach if something was not already seriously wrong.

If we want to save whales, we should concentrate on other more subtle dangers: many biologists regard pollution of the oceans as a greater threat than the harpoon. It may even have been responsible for poor Moby's disorientation.



## Letters to the Editor

Europe, for good or ill

TO DESCRIBE Tory dissent as "xenophobic" (The real choice here, March 27), ignores the responsible constitutional objections of John Biffen and Richard Shepherd. The depiction of the European Union is also questionable.

David Marquand writes of it as "a Christian-cum-social-democratic Europe, proto-federal, even if not formally federalist". In structure, embodying a distinct, European model of politics, economics and society. He may think, or wish it so, but the Treaties and modus operandi demonstrate the contrary.

Even the implication that the Union is federal, to which both main parties are opposed, is incorrect. In practice a unitary state "a united state of Europe" is rapidly developing by means of progressive replacement of key functions of national governments and parliaments by the integrated authority of Union institutions.

Instead of a spectrum-free constitution, the Treaties specify perpetual, or even contrived, competition in order to implement *laissez-faire*, unless modified by negotiated "flexi" of which the CAP is the prototype. Most national financial or legal arrangements for "the common good" are thus outlawed in favour of the needs of a single and competitive market, unless specifically permitted. National supports are being replaced by the regional and social funds fuelled by huge, unaccountable and virtually invisible bulk national subscriptions. The structure is thus doubly undemocratic.

Governments, electors and taxpayers are progressively being denied the choice of how funds are to be raised, due to harmonisation of taxation; how they are to be spent, due to central control, which together prohibits democratic choice by electorates in the national mix of public and private endeavour, separation indeed.

"The real choice here" is whether or not electors and parties in the UK should opt for still further development of a unitary state of Europe, complete with a new version of divine right, or not.

Nigel Spearing MP, House of Commons, London SW1A 0AA.

DAVID MARQUAND's essay, offering a choice between "huddling together in Little England" or "a genuine role in a developing greater Europe" cannot carry conviction, relying as it does on semantic leading and inaccurate comparison. Six times, the UK relationship with Europe is compared with that of Hong Kong and China, and yet Japan would make a better subject for comparison in terms of land mass and population.

Marquand does not suggest that Japan should join China, though I believe China is enthusiastic, and does not compare Japan with Hong Kong. Could it be that his justification for the UK joining a federal Europe is as sound as the comparison between the UK and Hong Kong?

Simon Mulholland, 24 John Street, Brightlingsea, Essex CO7 0NA.

## Cruel choice

IN JUST eight words — "his penis was mutilated following a botched circumcision", probably non-medical — Sharon Krum describes the source of the plight of John/Joan (Women, March 31). When will the pro-mutilators learn that it is unacceptable to abuse babies of either sex in this way?

Ian McRobert, Park Road, Peterborough PE1.

## Candidates search for survival

YOU describe John Major (Masterplan flounders in sleaze, March 29) as having a powerful message when he said: "The conservatism I'm talking about isn't just for the lucky... it's for those whose life is a struggle, for those who don't have the best education, don't have a decent home, don't have a job".

This is a description of conservatism as failure. Nothing appears to have been achieved, if after having been in power for the past 18 years Major is able to draw up such a list.

Colin Hastie, 103 Como Road, Forest Hill, London SE23 2JN.

UNUSUALLY, Hugo Young's analysis of John Major's character and motivation is wrong (Major is mixed in hubris and decay, March 27). Hubris, arrogance, the refusal to see reality are not unheard of among politicians, but they lead to tragic (or at least dramatic) endings, as was the case with Mrs Thatcher. The one thing that can be said about John Major,

from Lord McAlpine's description of him at Chequers as a man pretending to be the curtains, to his handling of the sleaze affair, is that he is a great survivor. Chastity governments are full of people who look and sound like the nice guy next door. They can even lead them.

Thomas Harrison, 123 Hemmingsford Road, London N1 4NT.

IT CAN truly be only a testimony to nearly 20 years of Conservative government that the politicians exposed in the cash for questions scandal could even consider standing for re-election in the approaching poll.

What political forum do we have in a supposed democracy when a billionaire entrepreneur can dictate a political agenda? Surely this is more intrinsically anti-democratic than the unions setting the political agenda under a Labour government, which seems to be every Conservative's worry?

J Mawn, 5a Bedford Place, Brighton BN1 2PT.

LABOUR'S withdrawal of its parliamentary candidate in Tatton is an act of arrogance and an abuse of democracy. Tony Blair has treated Labour members and voters as his personal property. Their work, their loyalty, their wishes, have been thrown away for the sake of one day's headlines. They have been deprived of their right to vote Labour, and for Labour policies on issues which affect their personal lives; they will be ordered instead to vote solely on the sleaze issue, for an as yet unknown candidate, with no political convictions.

This is a shabby way to treat voters.

Richard Heller, Oval Publishing, 30 Crewdson Road, London SW9 0LJ.

COULD it be that the withdrawal of the Labour candidate in Tatton is not quite as high-minded as it seems? The other major local issue is one in which Labour's own principles look shaky. Many constituents are furious at the neighbouring Labour au-

thority which is invading their countryside with the unnecessary desecration and pollution of a second runway for Manchester Airport. The worry for us all is that whatever fine words Labour pronounces, its deeds are something quite different.

Laurence Marshall, 9 Brooklands Avenue, Widdington, Manchester M20 1JE.

MICHAEL Heseltine, talking about Piers Merchant on Radio 4, is quoted as saying "He must listen to what I have just said very carefully" (Sex claim MP defies Major, March 28). Leaving aside the question of the tenses in this sentence, which are a little odd, is it compulsory for Tory MPs to listen to the Deputy PM on the Today programme? A suspicion arises: does Heseltine perhaps have cassette of his interview prepared and circulated throughout the parliamentary party?

Jeremy Stiles, 128 Trevelyan Road, Tooting SW17 9LW.



## Not a Pope on the slope

SUPPOSE that virtually everyone buying the Guardian is aware of the paper's stance on a number of issues. However, according to Peter Stanford (God's call, March 29) the Pope's "trips have taken on the air of a bygone era of spectacles, of world fairs and centenary expeditions, of the British fleet sailing majestically into the great harbours of the globe to show the flag and quell any 'trouble with the natives'".

Whereas he "used to enjoy nothing more than marching a team of bloated cardinals up and down an Alpine peak... [he is now] looking as grey and lifeless as the municipal buildings in his native Krakow, [and]... in Poland he is no longer seen as the conquering hero... He has come to despair of his fellow countrymen and women, isolated on the international stage, alienated in his homeland, physically enfeebled."

What? Has the man done nothing right, even in the world's, let alone God's view? No saving grace that even open-minded Guardian columnists could point out? No justified praise for his part in the changes in Poland? No approbation for consistently speaking out against political repression, whether from right or left, and for constantly asserting the true dignity of men?

Let us thank God that having grown tired of John Paul, Stanford's unbiased view can now lead the world (or at least those fortunate enough to read the Guardian) into that undogmatic truth which he espouses so well.

Fr Roger Miller, St Michael's Vicarage, Caldemore, Walsall WS1 3RQ.

In defence of the overwhelmed

THE decision by senior judges that a woman cannot be legally forced to undergo a Caesarean (Foetus has no rights, March 27), if she is mentally competent and unbothered by the operation, is surely logical as well as just.

Many thousands of women harm their unborn babies through drug addiction, including smoking and drinking, but there is no legal obligation to stop. The mother, not the foetus, in those circumstances, is the one with rights, behaving well or badly as she chooses.

Jane Bolger, Frinches Road, Penkthill, Stoke-on-Trent, Staffordshire ST4.

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Many thousands of women harm their unborn babies through drug addiction, including smoking and drinking, but there is no legal obligation to stop. The mother, not the foetus, in those circumstances, is the one with rights, behaving well or badly as she chooses.

Jane Bolger, Frinches Road, Penkthill, Stoke-on-Trent, Staffordshire ST4.

PLEASE excuse my ignorance, but why does a baby have the right to protection and care once it is born, but before the birth it doesn't? What sort of against system do we have in this country where vulnerable human beings, who cannot make their own choices, are put at risk of death or disability because the mother has religious or other views?

No one has the right to force their views or religious values on to others who cannot defend themselves or make their own choices. Perhaps children and vulnerable people need a law to protect them. Of course I oppose unnecessary medical intervention in childbirth but someone has to protect vulnerable members of society.

The only people who seem to have rights these days are intelligent, healthy, able-bodied 18 to 60-year-olds. If you're very old and ill, or very young, then you just don't matter.

Ms A I Browning-Tewesbury, Nest Estate, Hebden Bridge, West Yorkshire HX7.

We do not publish letters where only an e-mail address is supplied; please include a full postal address. We may edit letters: shorter ones are more likely to appear.

## Turned off by digital delivery

WE ARE astounded the BBC is proposing to launch its new digital free to air services via satellite before digital terrestrial or cable television is available.

These services, funded by the licence fee, should not be used to enhance the attractiveness of a service almost exclusively supplied on a subscription basis.

The BBC has argued that its new digital services will be available free to anyone who cares to invest in the equipment. However, it is hard to see consumers buying satellite digital receivers just to access the new BBC services.

We do not want to see consumers being led by the BBC into investing in one form of digital technology before the availability of real choice.

Once all forms of digital broadcasting are up and running, it would be perfectly acceptable to deliver licence fee funded services via all platforms. To use BBC finance to fund a service only available to a few customers is unacceptable. This is hardly the way to ensure the success of digital terrestrial television.

Benet Middleton, Consumers' Association, 2 Marylebone Road, London NW1 4DF.

## Women wanted

YOUR report (Call falls for top women school staff, March 28) of last week's Association of Teachers & Lecturers annual conference, though strictly speaking accurate, could have been misleading. Delegates certainly voted against a programme of positive discrimination to ensure that more women in teaching are promoted to senior jobs. Not only is positive discrimination illegal, it runs the risk that people are appointed on grounds of gender rather than merit.

Speakers on both sides were united on the fundamental issue — that the tiny minority of school heads and deputies is disproportionately large. The conference decided that quotas were not the answer. We did not reject a call for more women to be promoted. The question is whether the women in teaching are promoted to senior jobs.

Peter Smith, General secretary, ATL, 7 Northumberland Street, London WC2N 6DA.

## A Country Diary

DYMOCK. In 1310, the poet Lascelles Abercrombie wrote of the spring landscape of the Gloucester-Herford borderlands: "From Dymock, Kemplay, Newent, Bromborough, Redmarley, all the meadowland daffodils seem/ Running in golden tides to Rytton Firs." Now they run in eddies more than tides, but they still glid the fields and woods here more profusely than anywhere else in England. In 1988 the local villages and landowners got together and in a remarkable example of co-operation laid out a 10-mile long walk among the wild Lent lilies — the Daffodil Way. For its whole length you are never more than one or two hundred yards from the flowers. They grow in part knots by the side of farm tracks and in glittering sheets in orchard grassland. By Kemplay Brook they lap and tumble over the riverbank, "ever glancing, ever changing" as Dorothy Wordsworth noticed on the windswept banks of Ullswater in 1802. In Allens Grove they grow precisely as far as the

RICHARD MABBY

## Diary

Matthew Norman

WITH the RAF pouring billions into the Eurofighter project, concerns mount that the budget for maintaining existing aircraft is a little stretched. A bulletin inviting companies to tender for an MoD equipment contract has reached the Diary, and one page catches the eye. Under the heading "summary of requirements", would-be contractors are invited to tender for the "supply of both new and retrofitted types for all British military aircraft types for the period 1 January 1998 to 31 December 2003". It is always splendid, of course, to note the armed forces doing their bit to help out the poor old taxpayer, but some may view the plan to fit retrofits on £25 million more as a shade bizarre. What is the next... welding two old jets together (a bit of a respray, and you'll never know the difference), and winding back the clock? One theory posited by defence experts for this economy is RAF worries about pilfering. A recent MoD report highlighted the disappearance of £4 million worth of spare parts, among which, unfortunately, was the complete nose-cone of a Harrier Jump Jet which went AWOL.

PHILIP Greig writes from Swindon enclosing a letter he received from William Waldegrave. Mr Greig recently sent the Treasury minister a Guardian report referring to Sir Richard Scott's finding that he was guilty of sophistry and misleading Parliament, and Mr Waldegrave replied as follows: "I don't know where you got the press cutting" (cheeky monkey!), "but it is a lot of nonsense. Sir Richard Scott cleared me of any intention of misleading anybody. Sophistry once again, we fear. Although Scott accepted that Mr Waldegrave had no 'duplicitous intent', he also referred to the 'duplicitous nature' of his claim to have considered the shift in arms-sales policy too important to mention to the House."

SHOULD Mr Tony Blair ever do an Alec Douglas-Home, and swap Number 10 for the Foreign Office, there may be plenty of homework. Last summer, a journalist covering a speech in Oxford found Mr Blair surrounded in the street by young foreigners asking for autographs and to have pictures taken with him. "They're Brazilians," said Mr Blair affably. "I'm very big in Brazil." When you become Prime Minister you can go over there," said the reporter, "but you'll have to brush up your Portuguese first." "Portuguese?" said Mr Tony Blair. "Why Portuguese?"

AN OUTSIDER steps forward in the search for Press Office of the Year. It is Tesco, which has introduced a new kind of sandwich to certain stores. "The electoral roll" contains a different coloured cheese (Red Leicester for Labour, Blue Stilton for the Tories and Double Gloucester for the Lib Dems) for each party, and a local press release insists that people who will be watching sales closely. However, the Tesco press office seems unsure about whether the Representation of the People Act, guaranteeing equal exposure to the parties, will apply. Failure to keep stocks of each butty at equal levels could be a serious infringement. "I will certainly look into that," says a worried-sounding spokesman. "You have raised a very interesting question." Indeed so.

THE BBC has contrived an unusual piece of censorship. Shortly before the radio play *The Dough Boys* was performed live in front of a studio audience, an enquiry was made to the BBC pronunciation department about "onanism". Almost at once, a decree came down ordering that the line "the world had come to ogle the Kleenex noses of onanism" be changed to "the world had come to ogle the becoming noses". The explanation was that onanism refers to "an act of depravity", and is unsuitable before the watershed. And with all those little ones on standby to giggle at that much-loved playground word, who can argue with that?

VOTE FOR ME NEVER MIND WHAT THAT CREP MONKEY SAYS.

## Silly stand-off that blocked a showdown

## Commentary

Hugo Young

THE campaign, they all say, must now move on. It must get serious and positive. So say all of us. Yet the most enticing way this might have happened has been eliminated. Short of a change of mind by two party leaders, there will be no television debates between them. These could have been the most riveting, serious and unpredictable part of the 1997 election, a glowing contribution *pro bono publico*. Instead, the story of why they won't happen reveals the opposite: the littleness of party managers, their sole interest in positional advantage, their mistrust of anything they cannot absolutely control, and let the bloody voters take the hindmost.

There only ever was one genuine problem about staging such debates, and that was what to do about Paddy Ashdown. Everything else was marginal cosmetics. If Major and Blair were to be believed in their expressions of keenness to debate, it was all negotiable.

The negotiation, however, was not completed, and the reason was that the Conservatives were inept enough to let Labour walk away. While both sides talked a sincere game, neither really meant it. What, for the public, was a high priority became, for the politicians, a low one.

The Ashdown problem was partly legal and partly political. The law required him to get proper exposure in any debate programme, but the public's sense of fairness said this should not be a bystander. The Tories shouldn't be able to relegate him to the sidelines. He plainly needed to have some position in direct debate, and last week a formula came close to being agreed: a 75-minute programme, with opening statements by the three leaders, followed by 42 minutes of a three-sided debate and 21 minutes of a Major-Blair debate, with some audience participation thrown in.

The Tories wanted to reverse the 42 and 21 minute slots, which the Liberal Democrats wouldn't have swallowed but which exposed the possibility of a Tory concession to Ashdown's status as a full, debating participant. There were the makings of a deal. However, the Tories were bedevilled from the beginning by the presence, calling many of the shots, of Brian Mawhinney, the party chairman, whose aptitude for negotiation makes Ian Paisley look like a refined version of Henry Kissinger.

This wasn't the posture of a negotiator, but of a cheap point-scoring: also of a man consummately unfitted to his task. For plainly the Tories were very keen for debates to happen, as long as Ashdown could be minimised. It was their best chance of changing the weather. Being miles behind, they had nothing to lose. They wanted two 30-minute debates, as the BBC and ITV proposed; they wanted mutual cross-examination; and they came round to the presence of an audience so long as this was "dignified".

Major wasn't too pleased with some of the concessions Dobbs seemed ready to entertain, but the party's need and zeal for debates were close to being met — until the egregious Mawhinney, whose blisful impression of being in the world knew that Labour was running away and Blair was "chicken". This, of course, brought negotiations to a close. It was the

wrong signal to give to a party which, as Mawhinney must have known, had rather less interest than he did in ensuring debates took place. Taking high-minded umbrage, Labour walked off the hook, having previously adopted positions towards the cosmetic aspects of the matter that cast some doubt upon their commitment to serious debating in the first place.

The Labour negotiator, Lord Irvine of Lairg, insisted on only one debate not two, and wanted it to last only 60 minutes. This was the position agreed with the campaign director Peter Mandelson and, one must suppose, with Blair himself. Although the broadcasters were prepared to commit 90 minutes each, Labour sonorously declared the public would not want this and could not pay attention for so long. Furthermore, there must

Brian Mawhinney's aptitude for negotiation makes Ian Paisley look like a refined version of Henry Kissinger

be no cross-examination of one leader by another, on the grounds that, while Blair would naturally deploy his brilliant barrister's skills, Major didn't know how to respond other than with the personal abuse of which he has shown himself such a master at Prime Minister's Questions in the Commons.

Most of this strikes me as tactical tendentiousness, an impression increased by the preposterous contention that it wouldn't, in any case, be possible to "find time" in a busy campaign for two long debates. The fact is that in 75

minutes, however they divided it, it would not be possible for three men to do more than scratch the surface of half-a-dozen questions. Two 90-minute debates, however structured, would be seriously testing contributions. In an idiom that would make it quite impossible for Major, even if he were so inclined (which I doubt), to get away with the kind of bear-pit rudeness that both he and Blair profess to deplore about their exchanges in the Commons.

In that time-span, there would be a better chance than there will ever otherwise be for our two quasi-presidential leaders, with Ashdown having a fair presence alongside, to engage directly on issues where, in every other election forum, they will be finding ways to talk past each other — to the intense frustration of the interested voter.

That large attractive possibility should have made every little detail — audience, interrogators, sequence, proportionality etc etc — resolvable. But first it had to be taken seriously. There needed to be the spirit of compromise and a readiness for minor risk-taking in an arena that was admittedly a little imponderable but where the actual effects on the voting intentions of viewers, to judge from the international research instructions gathered together in a new study by the Hansard Society, are less than seismic.

The first to blame for failure are the Conservatives, whom shrill, neurotic insipidity has long been a trademark. But Labour were willing accessories. It is the old equation. Being 20 points ahead, they do not need debates. If there had to be one, they would have been a possible, a token, of sincerity, without being a hostage to fortune. As it is, they're free to declare the matter closed, which suits them nicely but the public not at all.

inhibiting a faster growth in the housebuilding sector." The CIB's corporate members have now banded together to form a new lobby group, seeking better openness for development in Britain. Its target audience is, of course, the DoE.

To ensure that no one is left in the cold, the DoE has set up a second quango "comprising leading figures in the property industry", which "provides advice to Ministers and officials on land and property issues, and on the development process". By happy chance, some of the people represented by the quango also turn up in a lobby group this week. After the Property Forum (PIF), the DoE organises meetings between ministers and the PIF to "ensure representatives from the industry are able to voice their concerns".

Suddenly, a whole raft of hitherto incoherent DoE statements of Environment rulings begin to make sense. How on earth, environmentalists wondered, could our earnest Mr Gummer have given the go-ahead for the second runway at Manchester? Why did he not call in the application to double the size of Wharfedale Quarry in the Mendips, which threatens the aquifer feeding the hot springs at Bath? Why did he fail to enforce a moratorium on out of town superstores until the superstores themselves began quietly to lobby for free, in the hope of securing their regional monopolies against competition from foreign companies?

IT SEEMED strange that the DoE was unable to account for the central assumption of its green paper on household growth: that cohabitation rates would be lower in 2016 than they were in 1996. It seemed even odder that, while claiming that it wanted to minimise the impact of the 4.4 million houses it said would have to be built for all the people living by themselves, the green paper made no mention of the principle disincentive to building homes in cities: the speculative price of urban land.

No one could understand why the DoE rejected a House of Lords proposal for a register of contaminated land. Nor why it suggested, to the fury of Tory MPs, the restoration of greenbelt guidelines, nor why it chose to offer special dispensation for new "statutory homes" to be built in the countryside. It has never been clear why Mr Gummer has not insisted that basic social needs be met before derelict urban land is used to build superstores, executive estates or millennium domes.

We environmentalists chose to regard John Gummer as a man hemmed in by big business, desperately struggling with the antediluvian attitudes of his cabinet colleagues. We blamed our environmental crisis on the Department of Transport, the DTI, Michael Heseltine, Michael Howard, anyone but the well-scrubbed, saintly chap who voted the greatest MP in Britain by a panel of environmental campaigners. But, as he fixes his eye on an even more prestigious job, Gummer can hide behind his green pieties no longer. In public he laments our problems, in private he presides over them.

The shrewdest man in the cabinet is not, as he claims, a friend of the earth, but its most deadly enemy.



The DoE polices the construction industry, yet also promotes it. And no one sells harder than John Gummer, says George Monbiot

## Foe of the Earth

WHEN he launched the Conservatives' environmental manifesto, John Gummer presented himself, once more, as the patron saint of the environment. Once more, his claims raised scarcely a murmur of protest. So credible have his pious pledges become that he is now being tipped as the next executive director of the United Nations Environment Programme. It is the most successful confidence trick that anyone in this government has executed. For John Gummer oversees a conflict of interest that makes the Ministry of Agriculture look like *The Untouchables*.

Mr Gummer is Britain's ultimate planning authority. His department represents the public interest in determining what kind of construction can proceed and where it should take place, and he is empowered to "call in" development proposals with a major environmental or social impact for final arbitration. The Department of the Environment is also, of course, responsible for environmental protection, which in theory should bring

it into regular conflict with the construction industry. But John Gummer's department has another function, just as central to its operations, but much less frequently discussed. The DoE, which is responsible for restraining the construction and property development industries, is also responsible for promoting them.

You might have imagined that a government so monogamously wedded to the free market would leave the building industry to fend for itself required, you would expect it to come from the DTI. But the British government seems to be the last institution in Britain to respond to its own exhortations. The DoE, according to its annual report "aims to help all sectors of the UK construction industry... succeed in their domestic, European and international markets. It is the advocate within Government and the European Union for these industries... It also acts as the focal point within Government for the property industry."

To these ends, the DoE has moved some of its most experienced civil servants into something called the Construction Sponsorship Directorate (CSD). "The industry itself," according to the DoE press office, "tells us precisely what it is they want and where they want it focused". Its demands fall on fertile ground. Senior figures from

the construction industry are seconded into the CSD, and civil servants from the CSD are given placements at Tarmac and Laing. Environment ministers provide regular briefings for directors of construction firms. According to a friend in the DoE, the CSD "has tremendous clout within the Department. Broadly speaking, what it proposes tends to happen."

Every year, John Gummer and his junior ministers have set out on trade missions with the directors of British construction companies. In 1996 and 1997, Gummer helped sell their wares in Israel and the occupied territories, India, the Philippines, Syria, Brazil, Argentina, Chile and Peru: countries not exactly renowned for matching development to the needs of people and the environment.

But even this, Mr Gummer decided, was not enough. In 1995, he established a quango called the Construction Industries Board, whose purpose was "to secure a culture of co-operation, teamwork and continuous improvement in the industry's performance". The board is composed of the Department of the Environment and representatives of the construction industry. Its chairman is Sir Ian Dixon of Wilmoth Dixon, who was knighted for his services to the CSD, into which both his son and Richard Wilmoth, another senior figure of the firm, have been seconded. Its president is John Gummer.

## Exit the loony left, enter the rabid right



Martin Kettle

FOR most of post-war British history, it has been the Conservatives and not Labour who have been the disciplined party. Loyalty and conformism came as naturally to most mid-20th century Tories as argument and independence did to Labour supporters of the same era. The prize for the party which would do what its leader told it would have gone as predictably to the Tories as the Scottish league title nowadays goes to Glasgow Rangers. Conservatives seemed to know instinctively how to do what was necessary. Labour, by contrast, always preferred to hold a conference about it.

Over the past two weeks, these roles have been reversed. Today it is Labour which behaves more like a Californian cult, its members ready to do, say and even to wear whatever the all-knowing leader Tony Blair demands, whereas the Conservatives long ago abandoned much of the old defiance that once held their party together. A party whose leader can only get one out of four awkward MPs to resign when he instructs them to quit is a party in which anarchy, and not John Major, gives the orders of the day.

It has often been said that, if they lose this election, the Conservatives must choose whether to indulge in a period of internal civil war not unlike that which ravaged the Labour Party after 1978. Many have predicted that the party will tear itself apart as soon as the disciplines of office are removed. Wiser observers, on the other hand, have tended to emphasise that Britain's natural party of government will find a way of drawing back from this brink. After the past week's shenanigans one cannot now be so sure.

Perhaps the most ominous sign for the future of the Conservatives is that their internal argument has so quickly focused on what was also one of the central issues in Labour's battles of the 1980s. The determination of Labour constituency parties to select and deselect their own parliamentary candidates, if necessary in defiance of the party leader, lay at the heart of the "Bennite" reforms of the early 1980s.

It was this reform, more than any other, which caused 25 Labour MPs to split from the party in 1981 to join the SDP. And it was this same change which also ensured

some of Labour's most controversial episodes of the 1980s: the selection of by-election candidates like Peter Tatchell in Bermondsey in 1983 and Delia Wood in Greenwich in 1987 which enabled the tabloids to brand Labour as the loony left party.

Today's Conservative grass-roots activists are not yet pressing for mandatory reselection of all sitting MPs, but their increasing determination to use constituency associations as a base from which to defy the party leader ought to ring alarm bells at Central Office. When it came to it this weekend, nothing that John Major could say was able to prevent local Conservative associations in Beckenham, Tatton and Cleethorpes from insisting on selecting the MP of their choice, however much damage it might do to the party's cause nationally.

It needs to be said that Conservative constituency associations have always jealously guarded their selection rights above almost all others, so

With polling a month away three out of four constituencies stuck two fingers up at Central Office

this weekend's revolt against Major is not unprecedented. "I have neither the will nor the power to make constituencies do what they resolutely do not want to do," wrote Lord Carrington when he was Tory Party chairman in 1973, and later chairmen including Cecil Parkinson and Norman Fowler have also had difficult run-ins with local activists.

Yet the defiance of the past fortnight looks like something wider and more important than anything these chairmen had to face. Faced with the increasingly clear wishes of the prime minister and the party chairman, with polling day only a month away, and with no evidence that the row was likely to disappear from the press, three out of four constituencies stuck two fingers up at Central Office. A weekend survey suggested that five out of six other constituencies supported them.

This isn't merely the cyclical reassertion of grass-roots autonomy, of the kind which normally makes itself felt in the party only over things like the proportion of local fund-raising that should go to Central Office. This is something much more damaging. It is evidence of the extent to which Major's Tory party is already a riven organisation. It implies that the only election the activists are interested in is the leadership election. It looks very much as if era of the loony right is already upon us.



## Albanian children face food crisis

Confusion and chaos are mounting in Albania. According to Albanian government reports, food stocks are down to a tenth of normal levels. Those least able to help themselves will, as ever, be most at risk. Children's hospitals and orphanages do not know where the next food supplies will come from.

UK charity Children's Aid Direct, formerly Feed the Children (Europe), has considerable experience of working in Albania and has a team on the ground. As soon as it is safe to deliver food and other urgently needed aid, this charity will make those deliveries. And they are appealing today for your help to do it.

A donation of £30 could buy enough high-protein food for 136 children. As the crisis deepens, Children's Aid Direct will be doing what they can - will you?

LET ME HELP BRING HOPE TO ALBANIA

Here is my gift of:  
☐ £30 ☐ £60 ☐ £90 ☐ £250\* ☐ £ (other)

\*A gift of £250 or more is worth almost an extra third to us under Gift Aid

Please make your cheque payable to Children's Aid Direct OR  
 Please debit £ from my ☐ Visa ☐ MasterCard ☐ Switch

CARD NUMBER \_\_\_\_\_  
 Last three digits of Switch card no. ☐ ☐ ☐ Switch issue no. ☐ ☐ ☐

EXPIRY DATE \_\_\_\_\_ SIGNATURE \_\_\_\_\_  
 NAME (CAPS) MR/MRS/MIS \_\_\_\_\_  
 ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_  
 POSTCODE \_\_\_\_\_

TELEPHONE \_\_\_\_\_  
 OR please phone our donation line  
**0990 600 610**  
 Please send to: Children's Aid Direct  
 Dept No. 515, FREEPOST,  
 Reading RG1 1BR.

Children's Aid Direct  
 Registered Charity No. 803236

## 10 OBITUARIES

William Hilton

# Early orbits in space

**T**HE pioneering work of William Hilton, who has died aged 84, on the potential uses of satellites in highly eccentric elliptical orbits complemented that of Arthur C. Clarke on geosynchronous satellites.

But Hilton received little recognition, apart from verbal acknowledgments from the Russians, who adopted what they call the Molniya orbit of 400 x 40,000km with 68 degree inclination for their telecommunications and early warning satellites. The US military also used these highly-elliptical orbits for their data relay satellites working with spy satellites. No doubt the reason Bill Hilton was awarded no honours and not even an entry in Who's Who was his complete lack of self-importance and pomposity.

I first met him in 1962 in an interview for the BBC when the newspapers were full of headlines such as "Space Age Brains are on the Dole". In the week that America launched John Glenn into orbit, Hawker Siddeley fired ten of its top space scientists, including Hilton, then aged 49 and head of their astronautics section, because the government had not given a penny to back the team's work on satellites and other space matters.

He had earlier made notable contributions to the war effort as a principal scientific officer at the National Physical Laboratory, designing their wind tunnels and contributing to the development of Barnes Wallis's bouncing bombs and the design of the Mulberry Harbours towed across the channel to protect the D-Day invasion forces. Before that he had earned a place in aviation history by coining the phrase "the sound barrier" when explaining the problems of supersonic flight to a journalist.

Born in Highgate, Bill Hilton studied physics at the Royal College of Science and aerodynamics for his PhD at Imperial College, London. His postgraduate work was on photographing the vortices around aircraft which enable them to fly — research which was used in the design of the Westland Berp helicopter.

He had joined the National Physical Laboratory in 1935 and at the end of the war he was seconded to the John Hopkins University in the US, where he worked on ramjet research and supersonic propulsion for missiles. He returned in 1949 to the Royal Aircraft Establishment at Farnborough and a year later joined Armstrong Whitworth as chief aerodynamicist.

When he was fired, he spent 18 months in Paris as



The flight stuff... William Hilton demonstrating the Mach 3 wind tunnel, operating at speeds of 2,000mph, in 1955

secretary of the International Astronautical Federation (IAF) before joining the British Aircraft Corporation as assistant to the Technical Director. He took early retirement in 1973 to pursue his many other interests.

He published several technical books including *High Speed Aerodynamics* (1951) and *Manned Satellites — Their Achievements and Potentialities* (1965), and numerous papers. These included predictions for the British Interplanetary Society, of which he was one of the earliest fellows, describing how satellites could be safely brought back to earth by the use of aerodynamic lift. This was before the launch of Sputnik 1.

It is a loss that Hilton never found time to complete his autobiography. He related

how Sir Sydney Camm came into his Coventry office one day complaining that when their employers wanted something faster than the Hurricane he had designed, the Typhoon, followed by the thin-winged Tempest. Then they wanted Mach 0.9 and he designed the Hunter; then they wanted Mach 1.3 and then Mach 1.7 and then 2.5. "Where will it all end?" he cried, to which Hilton, flustered by the Ministry and saying "Cut the cackle, we should go straight to Mach 3.4 and I'll tell you why!" Instead of being depressed

by lack of government interest in his proposals for a British communications satellite. Hilton set about educating the young. In 1963, NASA loaned him a Space Shuttle which he drove around Britain, lecturing to 22,000 students and schoolchildren on the opportunities that space activities would provide. His recreational interests ranged from ukulele-playing to ice-skating, pelargonium-growing and stamp-collecting. He joined the George Formby Society and the Ukulele Society of Great Britain and enlisted many a scientific congress with his playing.

I never remember him missing the annual IAF Congress, but last year, in Beijing, he had a fall and his health began to fail. But he still delivered an erudite and closely-argued paper on CETI

(Communications with Extra Terrestrials) and the likelihood that they had probably already tried to communicate with us, being frustrated by the Time Barrier or the fact that some ill-informed accountant had cut out our ability to listen as not cost-effective. He also pointed out that the fictional flying saucer was by no means a silly shape. Aerodynamic shapes, he maintained, are universal language, recognised and understood by little green men as well as by us.

Bill Hilton is survived by his wife Joan, whom he married in 1939, and their son and two daughters.

Reginald Turrill

William Frank Hilton, aerodynamicist, born June 10, 1912; died March 6, 1997.

Sir John Figgess

# Versatility in the Orient

**I**N 1951, along with another new arrival at the British Embassy in Tokyo, I waited in the Chancery lobby, uncertain where to go, when a tall figure in military uniform bounded up the steps accompanied by a large dog. He shook hands warmly and engaged us in conversation when one of us was unwise enough to refer to "The Japs". This brought an instant and firm rebuke. John Figgess, who has died aged 86, was always a stickler for good manners.

This incident took place when he was assistant military adviser (he was later to become military attaché) in Tokyo before the Peace Treaty with Japan came into force in 1952. Demilitarisation was over and Figgess was now involved with problems arising from the Korean War, which had brought many United Nations troops to bases in Japan.

He was a man of great versatility. This was shown again in 1961 when, on retirement from the army — a career which had begun in military intelligence — he took charge of the Embassy Information department. That department's previously mainly political role was expanded, under his direction, to embrace a vigorous campaign of commercial publicity.

The productions were stylish as well as informative, and the local staff came to include attractive Japanese women, mainly graduates of his daughters' school, the International Sacred Heart in Tokyo.

Few of us who worked for him could approach his own very high standards of Japanese but he left no doubt as to the ideal to which we should strive. He had first learned the language when he went to live in Japan in 1933 as an alternative to university.

John Figgess's knowledge of oriental art, the foundation of his third career years later at Christie's (he was a director from 1973-82), was based on his experience in Japan. Many Japanese family collections of Chinese and Korean porcelain, as well as of Japanese pieces, had come on to the market in the difficult years following the country's defeat. Figgess developed friendly relations with many of the art dealers and it was a joy and privilege to accompany him to their shops.

These were sometimes located in beautiful rural surroundings. I recall one occasion when we sat in a small room in the mountains above Nikko, overlooking a river valley, drinking tea as the wares were produced for our inspection. Figgess was never arrogant about his knowledge and often said that, in matters of artistic

taste, he bowed to the judgment of his Dutch-born wife, Aletta.

He made many contributions to Anglo-Japanese relations, in addition to his service in the Embassy and his direction, later, of the British pavilion at Expo '70 in Osaka. One was the encouragement of the development of Rugby football in Japan. This began, in a small way, with matches between Japanese teams and British regimental teams including some from Hong Kong. Further inspiration for the Japanese players was provided by visits of teams from Oxford and Cambridge. It was also a member of Figgess's staff that I was given time to work as an attaché to the British team in the 1964 Tokyo Olympics.

The dog which had rushed up to us in 1951 had many canine successors — it is



To the manners born... John Figgess

hard to imagine John Figgess without a dog. Jimmy, his Labrador of the 1950s, in addition to ruling the British Embassy compound in Tokyo, acquired, through the influence of his master, access to public spaces there otherwise denied to dogs. Physical vigour remained with Figgess, right up until his advanced years.

Although he enjoyed the company of the good and the great, his views on many subjects differed sharply from those of the Establishment and were often left-of-centre. He found a defence policy based on nuclear deterrence increasingly distasteful and believed that partition must give way to unity in Ireland. He had no time for the prejudices of the Eurocentrics.

One looks back on nearly 50 years of friendship with gratitude for many kindnesses and many stimulating occasions. He is survived by his wife and two daughters.

Richard Ellingworth

John George Figgess, diplomat, soldier, born November 15, 1906; died March 20, 1997

Stephanie Tepper Cran

# An eye on the frontline

**S**TEPHANIE Tepper Cran, who has died aged 46, was a talented filmmaker in her own right and also one half of the most successful partnership in historical documentary making in Britain.

With her husband, William Cran (who directed and wrote their films), they set up the independent production company Invision. They made a string of successful programmes, mostly, in the last few years, for the BBC2 historical documentary strand *Timewatch*.

Their most recent film *The Boer War — the first media war* was transmitted only two days before she died. Like all of the previous films she produced for *Timewatch* (which

included *The Secret File on J Edgar Hoover* and *History of a Mystery*), the Boer War film was enthusiastically received by critics and audience alike. She won a host of awards, both for the films she made with her husband and those she made herself. There were also some outstanding films she produced and edited working in her native America at WGBH, the public broadcasting station in Boston.

Born in Brooklyn, she went to WGBH as a film editor working on *Frontline*, a major documentary series. She came to Britain to work with William whom she had met in Boston.

Her work was characterised by its clarity, precision

and imagination; strengths she demonstrated not just in the creative side of film-making but on the business side. She was straightforward and direct and knew instinctively that the budget should be spent on the screen not on the office. The draft script of a Cran film would always be printed on the reverse side of old correspondence — reading the back of the script would give an insight into how business was doing; the answer was that it was always booming.

For more than three years Stephanie had cancer. She endured painful treatments but still managed to work and retain her considerate manner. She even spent time researching her own illness

as if it were a piece of journalism so that the doctors feared her that she knew more about it than they did. I sometimes thought they were right.

Her grace and concern for others were unique. The last time I met her she was quick to ask how I was. "Did I have a slight cold?" She and William had three daughters. Jessica, aged 12 and the twins, Chloe and Rebecca, who had their fourth birthday hours before their mother died. She died as she lived, with dignity and courage.

Laurence Rees

Stephanie Tepper Cran, film producer, born March 27, 1950; died March 20, 1997



Clarity and imagination... Stephanie Tepper Cran

Letters

**Michael J Smith writes:** Erik de Mauny's internationalist outlook (obituary, March 21) was reflected in his crusade for more imaginative modern language teaching. Qualified in Russian himself and reporting for the BBC from Moscow, he showed the concern of many linguists that Russian was so little taught in Britain due to the preponderance of ubiquitous French. In the mid-1970s, as a Russian teacher, I took part in a de Mauny-sponsored radio programme which examined ways in which learning the so-called "minority" languages could be extended. He ended the broadcast by testifying that, as well as using foreign languages in his job, he had found them tremendous fun. Twenty years on the situation in schools remains as French-dominated as ever. How disappointed de Mauny must have been.

**Brian Durran writes:** Beside her work for other museums and galleries, Shireen Akbar (obituary, March 14) inspired, collected and acted as consultant for the exhibition, *Traffic Art: Rickshaw Paintings from Bangladesh*, which ran from 1988-91 at the Museum of Marking (the ethnography department of the British Museum). Presenting popular culture in august institutions never lost its irony for her; in the last analysis it was what she did that mattered. She never forgot the world outside. Shireen's energy, vision and warm friendship will be much missed by those privileged to know her.

**Robert Vincent writes:** Despite your admirable obituary (March 22) of the Rev W Awdry, I find it difficult to believe he is dead. Let us just say that he has been shunted into a siding.

Charles Dederich

# Rise and fall of a cult

**I**N 1958, Charles Dederich, who has died aged 83, rented a shopfront in Ocean Park, California, with a \$33 welfare cheque and put up a sign: "TLC", for the Tender Loving Care Club. Within a year he had renamed it Synanon. He moved to Santa Monica, he was jailed for 23 days for running an unlicensed "hospital" in a residential area.

Undeterred, he opened another centre and the rehabilitation technique he called "The Game", an often bruising group encounter, began attracting hundreds.

By the mid-1960s, he and Synanon were famous and rich. He moved his flock to a 3,000-acre site in the lovely

Tomas Bay area just north of San Francisco. Synanon became a \$30-million, tax-exempt, non-profit business, owning 100 vehicles, airplanes and boats.

But increasing signs of paranoia and bullying began to dominate Dederich's personality. In classic cult style, he isolated his followers and in 1974 declared Synanon a religion. Dissenters were threatened and beaten. On a whim he ordered his devotees to dissolve existing marriages and form "love partnerships" that he dictated.

Dederich had been born into a German-American Catholic family in Toledo, Ohio. After graduating from college he began an academic

career at Notre Dame University. But alcoholism soon finished his career, along with two marriages.

The great American temptation, a new beginning in California, beckoned. He joined the local Alcoholics Anonymous where he discovered he had charisma; admirers would drop by to listen to his tirades against alcohol and drugs. TLC soon followed.

The beginning of the end for Synanon came in 1978 with the case of the rattle-snake in the letter box. A lawyer who represented two Synanon apostates in litigation against Dederich was bitten by a four-foot rattler when he reached into his mail box.

Two Synanon disciples admitted attempting to murder the lawyer. Dederich was put on probation while Synanon was suspected of concealing large quantities of guns and munitions. In 1979, the tiny local newspaper, the Point Reyes Light, won a Pulitzer Prize for a series exposing the cult.

Part of the probation deal was that Dederich separated himself from Synanon. With him, he declined and went out of business. Dederich moved to California's central valley where he died.

Christopher Freed

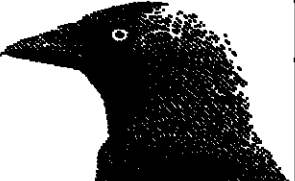
Charles "Chuck" Dederich, cult leader, born March 22, 1913; died February 28, 1997

Birthdays

**Brightie Askonas**, immunologist, 74; **George Baker**, actor and writer, 66; **Anna Coote**, deputy director, Institute of Public Policy Studies, 50; **Cynog Dafis**, Plaid Cymru MP, 59; **David Davies**, chairman, Johnson Matthey, 67; **Prof Kay Davies**, director, MRC Clinical Science Centre, 46; **Chris Evans**, broadcaster, 61; **Prof Rodrick Flood**, vice-chancellor, London Guildhall University, 58; **Sir Anthony Gail**, chairman, Docklands Light Railway, 67; **David Gower**, cricketer, 46; **Television commentator**, 40; **Sir Nicholas Henderson**, diplomat, former ambassador to Washington, 78; **Gale Johnson**, Houghton, jockey, 56; **Baroness McFarlane of Landaff**, 48; **David Wiggles**, Department of Nursing, Manchester University, 71; **Prof Maxwell McGlashan**, former head of chemistry, University Col-

lege, London, 73; **Al MacGraw**, actress, 53; **William Manchester**, US historian, 75; **Madeleine May**, former director, International Bar Association, 59; **John Murdoch**, director, Courtland Institute Galleries, 52; **Sir Dimitri Obolensky**, Russian and Balkan historian, 79; **Marie Patterson**, former TVC president, 52; **Jan Rowell**, actress, 68; **Charles Price**, US diplomat, former ambassador to Britain, 68; **Steve Race**, broadcaster, 76; **Debbie Reynolds**, actress, 65; **Ryan Robertson**, former director, Whitechapel Gallery, 72; **Rosemary Spencer**, ambassador to Holland, 56; **Kathy Stobart**, saxophonist, 72; **Leonard van Geest**, former chairman, Littlewoods, 48; **David Wiggles**, Plaid Cymru MP, 58; **Prof Sir Dillwyn Williams**, pathologist, 67; **J J Williams**, rugby player, 48.

Jackdaw



Soft-centred

**FIKILE** Bam arrived on Robben Island in 1964, a few months before Mandela and his colleagues, after a different trial. When the Mandela group arrived, they were put in a separate wing of the prison. "On July 18, 1964, my birthday," Bam said, "the guys in my section started singing Happy Birthday to me early one morning... Every year after that Mandela had a gift for me on my birthday. We were allowed to buy sweets and biscuits over Christmas and he would keep them seven months so he could give me a present. It embarrassed me, because I could never keep them for

seven months." (Talk about self-discipline: those were the only treats a prisoner got in a whole year.)

I told President Mandela that Fikile Bam had told me about the birthday presents. He beamed. "Yes," he said, "black magic. 'Black magic' means, 'Black Magic, they're a brand of chocolates'."

Anthony Lewis defining Nelson M through the details. New York Times Magazine.

Womb service

**I**HAD my 12 children alone. I didn't let anyone near me. "Leave me in peace," I always said to the nurses. "It will come out on its own. Why do you want to rummage around in there?" I always give birth very gently — like stroking a rose. It never lasts long: I'm not one of those women whose labours drag on all night, for days even... I was an [the god Siva] has done his work well: he'd put plenty of children in my womb; beautiful children, born in perfect health. It's only afterward that some have died. One of diarrhoea,

another of apoplexy. All of them have walked! Two of my children even came to the peanut harvest. How many children have I had? Wait... I've had 12. The first was a girl, Mutama. Then a boy, Ganesan. After that a girl. After that I don't remember any more. But I've definitely had 12: we registered them at the registry office. Down there they enter all that into a big ledger. Ayo!... I don't remember any more. They're born they die. I haven't got all my children's names in my head; all I have left are my fourth child, my eighth, my eleventh...

*The testimony of Vramma, the pariah mother and village midwife, stands out among pages by public chaps in Grant's Indian Jubilee issue.*

With one bound

**HOUDINI** promoted himself as a prodigious physical specimen, a man adept at swimming under water, disassembling boilers, picking locks, untying knots and surviving for over an hour in a sealed coffin. Yet his particular tech-

niques had to be concealed from audiences and the committees that were appointed to authenticate his escapes. "The first thing to ascertain is, if any member of the committee has followed the sea," he warned.

By the 1890s, the definition of magic as sleight-of-hand was widely in use, at least in English. During the 1870s and 1890s, however, the rise of spiritualism gave new life to supernatural claims. To counter their critics, mediums became accomplished conjurers and escape artists, providing Houdini with inspirational examples.

Houdini hated spiritualists and later made a career out of exposing fraudulent mediums. Still, he benefited from the aura of mystery surrounding such performances. No matter how often he disavowed supernatural claims and celebrated his own artistry, audiences were always ready to suspend disbelief when confronted with his powers. Houdini did little to discourage this. Usually working behind a curtain, he

concealed his struggles to escape handcuffs, straitjackets, chains and padlocked containers. When he did allow himself to be seen, he failed about more than was necessary to make the escape look harder than it was. The first approach preserved the possibility that unseen forces were at work; the second revealed the mystery as an awesome personal achievement. Houdini's appeal blended spirit and matter.

Houdini's unique performances grew out of an unlikely fusion of spiritualism, conjuring, physical culture and professional crime, combining features of the séance, the magic act, the muscle show and the burglary.

*Erich Weiss's biography of the showman, as reviewed in the New Republic.*

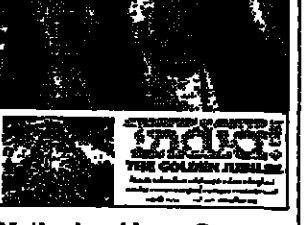
Money talks

**SERIOUS** ravers [in Utan Bator, Mongolia] do not make an appearance much before midnight. In the meantime, visitors can listen to palm court music in the lobby of the White House Hotel or go up

stairs to the lounge bar to hear English and French chansons by Ulanga, the resident singer...

At about 10pm, the gambling rooms at the New Classic Nightclub begin to fill up with high rollers who ostentatiously park their Mercedes and BMWs outside.

"These days, people like to spend their money, especially those who got rich through trading, so they come and try



Mother's pride... Grants

out gambling," explained Hong Kong entrepreneur and New Classic owner Eddie Siu. "Of course, they don't understand about losing very much."

*Jasper Becker reports for the South China Morning Post.*

Original Lad

**BEER** and football are the defining of the new masculinity: not the 2,000-calorie-a-pint beers of the past with their dark, bitter flavours, drinks that were developed to replenish the body's fluid levels after a long shift of manual labour. Lager is the drink of new-formed masculinity — cool in both senses of the word: light, American. Which is what the New Lad is, Masculinity Lite.

The publication of Nick Hornby's *Fever Pitch* was one of the most important texts for the study of masculinity ever published... It came to it belatedly, assuming it was a work of unutterable tedium about football when it was, of course, about how men manage their emotions and communication

with each other, by channeling it out into an activity that has nothing to do with their own lives but can be safely used as a way of demonstrating feeling without losing face.

The North London Jewish boy is the prototype New Lad for the phenomenon which has little to do with the traditional British working-class. It is a middle-class idea, a rescuing of masculinity from oblivion by non-labouring men. The New Lad encapsulates the lifestyle of the North London Jewish boy: brash, but terrified of failing into the impenetrable trap of the nebbish; urban but with a liking for certain contained outdoor activities such as football; middle-class but with a yen for the culture of the street.

*Linda Grant in The Jewish Quarterly on unexpected origins for those Loaded Lads.*

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Edited by Vanessa Harlow



## Racing

Romios follow's stable's Lincoln win with victory in Kempton's Rosebery Handicap. Chris Hawkins reports

## Quinn and Cole hit double top

THEY were giving away 12,000 doughnuts at Kempton yesterday, but the bookmakers were the only ones to have their cake and eat it as a succession of long priced winners made it a miserable day in the sun for punters.

Romios, at 14-1, won the Coral Rosebery Handicap to give Richard Quinn a second big race win of the season following the victory of Kuala Lipis in the Lincoln.

Quinn brought Romios late and fast to cut down Secret Aly in the final strides with Dreams End third and last year's winner Hazard A Guess a close fourth.

This was only Romios's fourth win in 25 attempts but Cole defended him saying:

"He deserves to win a nice race as he's always been in the prizemoney in his own class."

Cole intends to work his 2,000 Guineas colt Putra at Kempton this morning. "It will be just a sensible piece of work—the ground at home is getting terribly fast," said Cole, who may by-pass the Craven Stakes with Putra and go straight for the Guineas.

The two divisions of the Stalk Maiden, over seven furlongs, produced contrasting finishes with Strathmore Clear scraping home in the first and Greenway Bay running away with the second.

Strathmore Clear, ridden by Pat Eddery, won a bunch finish by a head from Mr Majica and encouraged Geoff Lewis, his trainer, to believe his troubles from last year are over.

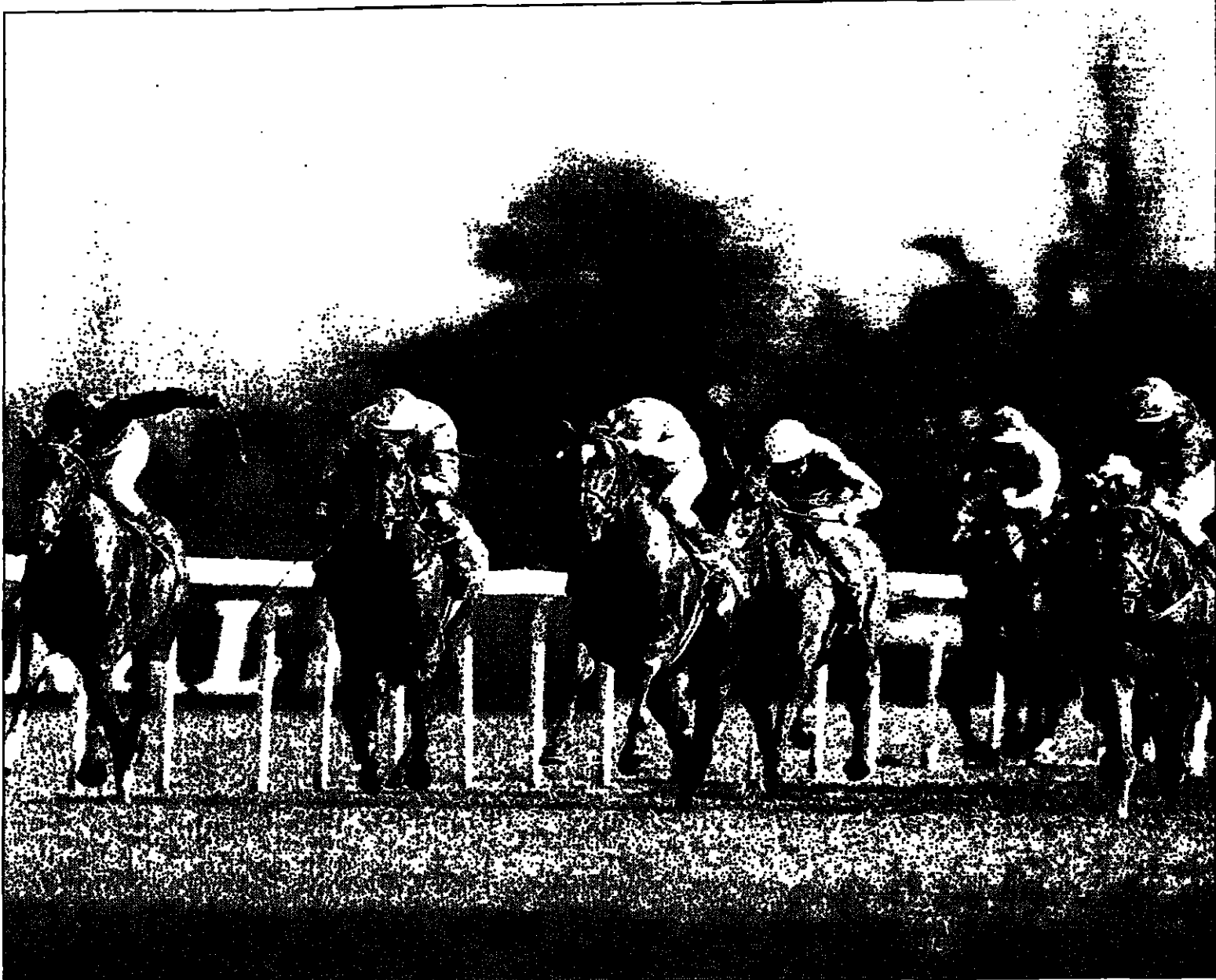
This was Lewis's first winner since August and the spring was back in the step of the perky, little Epsom trainer who commented: "Strathmore Clear had a bad throat infection last season, like a lot of my horses, but the problem seems to be behind us now."

"Last season was my worst apart from my first year when I couldn't train. Then I had a winner on the opening day but went all the year with only another four."

"I thought this horse would win the Chester Cup at Royal Ascot—his last run and backed him to do so but I didn't have a penny on him today. He needs a mile."

Another sure to appreciate a longer trip is Greenway Bay, who came from last to first to beat The Nitrogenator by three and a half lengths.

Geoff Wragg was not at the meeting but, never one to overrate his horses, he has not entered this Green Dancer colt in the Derby although



Heading home... Romios, third left, swoops inside the final furlong to clinch the Rosebery Handicap at Kempton

PHOTO: ALLSPORT

better races look well within his compass.

Confirmation that the Lewis stable is firing came when Eastern Profits made all the running on the far rail to beat the favourite Sea-Deer in the Teal Handicap.

Eastern Profits, ridden by Tony Clark, started at 20-1 which made it a 133-1 double for Lewis.

"Joe Naughton had Eastern Profits last season but he came back to me and has dropped 17lb in the handicap," added Lewis.

Irish apprentice Daragh O'Donoghue scored on his first ride in this country when stylishly punching

home Monassil for Ed Dunlop in the City Industrial Supplies Stakes.

The gambled on Oh Nellie, an import from the States, looked the winner until Monassil's stable jockey stormed through on the rails.

O'Donoghue rode 57 winners in Ireland when attached to Dermot Weld's stable and spent three months in Dubai this winter riding work for the Godolphin stable.

Dr Maslini, one-time favourite for last year's Epsom Derby but off the course since finishing seventh in the Irish Derby, returned with an impressive win in the Magnolia Stakes.

## Ivy House weighted to beat in-form Father Sky

Chris Hawkins

IVY HOUSE put up a fine performance for a novice when finishing second to Seven Towers in the Elder Chase at Newcastle in February and a reproduction of that effort should see him win the Sebel House Handicap Chase at Kempton this afternoon.

Jonjo O'Neill trains Ivy House who was beaten eight lengths by Seven Towers, the subsequent winner of the Midlands

Grand National. Father Sky has won his last three races and as a result has been climbing the handicap and has to give 18lb to Ivy House (3.50) who will relish every yard of this three miles, five furlongs.

At Uttoxeter, the improving Darakhshan (4.10) makes plenty of appeal with bottom weight in the Mobilphone Handicap Hurdle.

This is his first attempt in handicap company but he has earned his chance after two wins at Bangor.

The consistent Star Rage looks the main danger despite having to shoulder top weight.

John O'Shea, trainer of Go Ballistic, has chosen the CJ Pearce Novice Chase on this card to give Rare Occurrence (4.40) a first run over fences. He has schooled well and handles fast ground.

On Thursday's Dubai World Cup will be screened live on either Channel 4 or BBC but the latter want it brought forward by 45 minutes to slot it into the end of their Aintree broadcast.

## Golf

## Elkington putts himself in the money

David Davies sees the Australian strike it rich in Ponte Vedra

NEARLY 20 years ago, in the Australian outback town of Wagga Wagga, the 18-year-old Steve Elkington was having trouble with his older brother. Leading by one at the last hole in the town championship, Steve saw his brother hit a tee shot close enough for an almost certain birdie. A play-off loomed.

But, with the calmness that he has subsequently brought to his professional golf, the young Elkington took a four-iron and hit the ball straight into the hole. Brotherly love!

On Sunday afternoon the Australian treated 50 of the world's top players in similar fashion. Nobody got near him and he went on to win the Players Championship and its \$630,000 (£400,000) first prize by a record seven shots.

His final-round 69 gave him a 16-under-par 272; he had led from start to finish.

He has now won more than \$1 million from this event alone, has earned \$894,400 in four starts this year and since 1987, when he joined the US Tour, has raked in \$5,968,524.

Scott Hoch was second, winning \$378,000, and Colin Montgomerie, who finished 12 strokes behind the leader and joint seventh in the richest four-round event in golf, received \$108,083. "You get healthy pay-days with top-10 finishes like this," said Montgomerie, "but it's not what I'm looking for."

That is a healthy attitude and to be expected of a major whose mind is on majors. He went on: "That was a monumental effort, finishing in the top 10 the way I putted. If I'd putted anything like half-decent I'd have given Elkington a run for his money."

He then revealed that he has looked a tutorial. "I regard Brad Faxon as one of the best putters, and bolters-on, on the Tour and I've arranged a practice round with him at Augusta on Tuesday. I'm going to ask him how he does it."

Nick Faldo, joint 15th, had to accept US\$27,700 and, as usual after playing what he regarded as an unsatisfactory round, behaved in an unsatisfactory manner. He was prepared to talk — mutter — about his own round but when, understandably, a question was asked about his partner, the phenomenal Tiger

Woods, he could only say: "If you're finished with me, I'm not going to talk about him," and stomped off.

Woods is more gracious. The two had gone through the round without any obvious signs of communication, with Faldo marching ahead by 20 yards or more at every tee. "He goes about his business," said Woods. "He's in his own world. He plays like that — a lot of the great players do."

Only three players finished the week having played worse than Sandy Lyle (\$6,980), whose Saturday and Sunday scores were 77 and 80. After 68 and 74 it was a crushing disappointment and Lyle said afterwards: "There is no part of my game just now. This career has just ended. I'm into the ground. It's a burling golf course."

Golf can be a hard-going game in many ways. Davis Love would have won more than \$105,450 on Sunday but for a hiccup on the 15th green. Taking a practice putting stroke, Love saw his ball move and promptly called a penalty shot on himself. He then failed to replace it, so bringing about another penalty shot which he did not make. He had incurred. When he did not record it on his card writing down a four instead of a five, he had to be disqualified.

Elkington spent three hours on Sunday morning just hitting putts with a waiting for a 2.15pm tee-off time, and it paid off. Four times on the back nine he holed putts of 10 to 15 feet for pars. He had only 24 in the round.

"The putting was super all week," he said. "I think that was probably the best putting performance I've had since I've been on the Tour. I played so well I basically blew away the best field we've ever had."

Elkington... 24 putts

Elkington... 24 putts

Elkington... 24 putts

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## Southwell (A.W.)

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## Uttoxeter with guide to the form

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## Soccer

First Division: Queens Park Rangers 2, Wolves 2

## Wolves fightback delays Bolton party

Martin Thorpe

**D**O NOT be misled by reports that, mathematically, Bolton can still be denied promotion after this result. There is a difference between mathematics and semantics.

For Wolves to catch Colin Todd's team they must win their remaining six games and score 29 goals while Bolton would have to lose their last six without scoring.

There is about as much chance of that as there being a speech by the Hales Bopp comet. So congratulations Bolton, and the next question is what chance Wolves or QPR following the Burnley Park stars?

One needs a strong seal edge to support Rangers. Yesterday's performance was a nail-biting microcosm of their season, impressive in parts, woeful in others.

They could have scored five in the first half to further spark their play-off hopes but managed just two and found themselves hanging on against a Wolves side who belatedly woke up to the fact they were fighting to stay in contention for the second automatic promotion place.

It was just like Rangers' season. Three league defeats in November were followed by four successive wins; eight games without a win early this year were followed by four wins out of five. That Rangers are still snuffing a play-off place come Easter is a minor miracle in itself.

Despite the absence of the injured Sinclair they came off the back of Saturday's win at Oxford to produce their best football of the season for the first 35 minutes.

The Bull-less Wolves looked like relegation candidates as Peacock and Spencer carved large holes in the old-gold defence and a stream of blue-and-white striped team-mates queued up to swing in 24-carat crosses.

Rangers' first goal came on 14 minutes when the smallest man on the pitch, Spencer, outjumped one of the tallest, Curle. The second followed on the half-hour when Peacock chested down Barker's cross and slammed in from close range.

The Wolves manager Mark McGhee, who admitted afterwards that he got his team selection wrong, instigated a re-design soon after QPR's second goal, bringing on Thomas to coagulate the de-

fence and Law to silence Dicho.

By closing Rangers down and defending in numbers, Wolves started to control the match. Their first goal was somewhat controversial, Sommer dropping the ball after a high challenge by Roberts which normally would have been deemed a foul. Not this time, and Goodman lashed home the loose ball.

The equaliser came midway through the second half when Goodman fell under a sandwich challenge from Maddix and McDonald. Curle converted the penalty.

The result means another two points lost in Rangers' play-off calculations. For Wolves, three straight defeats and this draw leave Barnsley favourites to grab the second automatic promotion spot.

Still, nothing is certain, though one thing is for sure: should either team go up they will need a massive re-fit to last five minutes in the Premiership.

**QPR:** Sommer, Maddix, Brewster, Barker (Quashie), Tremain, McDonald, Velazquez, Spencer, Peacock, Dicho (Slade, 77), Impey, Murray.  
**Wolves:** Stowell, Smith, Probert, Adams, Veres (Law, 40), Curle, Corica (Thomas, 33), Ferguson, Roberts, Goodman, Osborn.  
**Referee:** S J Bates (Chesham).



Marching orders... the referee Graham Frankland orders Lou Macari from the Pulse Stadium pitch yesterday after the Stoke manager became incensed by a penalty decision, resulting in the Stoke defender Sigurdsson being sent off, and then a Bradford player only being booked for a challenge. "I accept the referee can make a mistake with the penalty, but what I can't accept is that he should make two mistakes," Macari said later. Bradford won 1-0. PHOTOGRAPH BY JOHN VARLEY

Reading 1, Barnsley 2

## Liddell things mean a lot

John Duncan

**B**ARNSLEY may not be fashionable and not too many £20,000-a-week Premiership fancy-dans will look forward to visiting but, if the south Yorkshire club continue to play like this, they will deserve to go up and they could have the staying power to last. Only the refereeing prevented them from overwhelming Reading yesterday.

They overwhelmed Reading with an encouraging array of goals inside the first five minutes and then kept the home side comfortably at bay. First Liddell wriggled past his man-marker McPherson on the right of the area and put in a low right-foot shot that took a heavy deflection off the Reading defender. Holsgrave spun wickedly and then dribbled slowly past the feet of the prone Mautone in goal.

Reading had self-destructed within 90 seconds and they should have faced a mission impossible two minutes later when Marcelino, the Trinidadian striker who arrived via Portugal, lifted the ball over

the last defender Gooding and was high, one-on-one with the goalkeeper, only for Mautone to save at his feet.

"It's just like watching Brazil," sang Barnsley's fans in permissible exaggeration. There was certainly nothing that would have disgraced the Premiership in the team's next approach and determined, effective attacking.

Liddell emphasised Barnsley's superiority by scoring their second on 16 minutes. Gooding was trying to clear but the ball cannoned wildly and hard across the area for the striker, reading first, to clip the ball to the goalkeeper's left from near the spot.

Divine intervention looked Reading's only hope and thus let it be written that the Barnsley defender Moses was judged to have given away a very dodgy penalty. Whether a flaming bush obscured the referee's view or not, the foul that he saw when Nogan fell half-heartedly under no challenge from Moses was not visible to anyone else in the ground, apart from the Reading management, of course.

Morley converted the kick. "The referee was bloody

atrocious," said Danny Wilson, the Barnsley manager. "He was diabolical. Some of his decisions were amazing and I couldn't believe the penalty. It was a joke and it got them back in the game."

Suddenly, with Barnsley riled, it was more like watching Uruguay as the late-changed striker, reading first, to clip the ball to the goalkeeper's left from near the spot.

Happily, the feuding stopped and the football restarted in a second half of more even quality and temper. Reading rarely gave the Barnsley goalkeepers any chance to distinguish himself; Lovell and Nogan were the chief culprits in this respect, their weak shots troubling only the half-boys.

Barnsley could have gone further ahead when their substitute, the Croatian Under-21 Bosanac, played a one-two only to be thwarted at the death by Blatterwick.

**Reading:** Mautone; Bernal, Parkinson (Cassidy, 77min), Gooding, Blatterwick, McPherson, Holgate, Williams (Culm, 77), Morley (Lovell, 47), Nogan, Boon.  
**Barnsley:** Watson; Eaden, Appleby (Rosen, 60), Sheridan, Moses, De Zeeuw, Hendrie, Radelaar, Liddell, Marcelino, Thompson.  
**Referee:** S. Bennett (Reading).

Huddersfield Town 2, Sheffield United 1

## Tracey's game to forget

David Hopps

**S**HEFFIELD United are suffering what their local evening paper, The Star, billed as the longest recorded promotion jitters in history, and a tension that descended around Christmas showed no signs of abating yesterday in a chaotic contest which included two sendings-off and arguably two own-goals.

The McAlpine Stadium has a futuristic feel but this Yorkshire derby was decidedly retro, awash with judicious tackles and heart-rending misjudgments. Defeat for United could be costly. They now lie five points adrift of an automatic promotion place and Barnsley, optimistic, inventive and, more to the point, second, have two matches in hand.

With United's first-choice goalkeeper Alan Kelly on international duty, Simon Tracey had demanded recognition for his own good form. So far, Law duty aside, that disaster should befall the stand-in, but for

it to occur after 40 seconds was going some. Dalton was credited with the goal — a soft header from Beresford's cross — but it should have been Tracey's, the keeper failing to his left to stop the ball and then inadvertently throwing it over the line.

Had Huddersfield then won a penalty, the referee Wolstenholme ruling that Tiler had pushed Facey outside the box, United's position would have deteriorated further. Instead they equalised when Hutchinson headed back into the area and Sinnott hooked the ball resoundingly past his own goalkeeper.

Huddersfield restored their lead within a minute. Beresford's cross was half-cleared and Cowan's looping header fell beyond Tracey and the covering Sanford.

The dismissal of Dyson for a second bookable offence offered United hope, only for Henry to follow him for two fouls within five minutes.

United were never more impressive than during the last 20 minutes when Fjortoft and Katchouro, who both began on the bench, re-established their striking partnership. Many in south Yorkshire are adamant that Howard Kendall must restore them for the rest of the season.

**Huddersfield Town:** Francis, Jenkins, Edmondson, Sinnott, Cowan (Gray, 45min), Beresford, Facey (Burnett, 52), Glover (Dalton, 58).  
**Sheffield United:** Tracey; Ward, Holsgrave, Tiler, Sanford (Ponson, 57), Alder, Hutchinson (Spodden, 54), Furling, Whitehouse, Walker, Taylor (Kitchener, 58).  
**Referee:** E Wolstenholme (Preston).

Cowan... looping header

Norwich City 1, Oxford United 1

## O'Neill missed

Nick Hutchings

**I**F Norwich City miss a place in this season's scramble for promotion, their manager Mike Walker may well curse the tug of the Irish.

Held to a frustrating draw by Oxford United yesterday, the Canaries will look ruefully at the substitutes' bench in Macedonia tomorrow night and wonder what might have been had Mick McCarthy not whiffed Keith O'Neill out of Walker's play-off plan.

On Saturday, as City put their promotion push back on track with the 3-0 win at Swindon Town, so the young Dubliner proved the perfect foil for the flying Eddie and the streetwise Fieck.

Despite his recent two-month absence with ankle and hernia trouble it was a display of sufficient skill, not to mention a simple matter of a goal, to persuade McCarthy to make the 21-year-old striker a late addition to the Republic of Ireland's World Cup squad. Norwich duly suffered as Oxford wrenched a point from a one-sided encounter.

"I was disappointed to lose Keith O'Neill; he's looked a threat since he's been back but, as usual we get them fit and they get them for the international," said Walker, forced to field his second-year trainee Drewe Broughton in O'Neill's absence.

Educated at Bedford Modern School, the 6ft 3in

Broughton is reckoned to fit City's thoughtful style of play. But, as Oxford clung on to their point, so a first-class hoodlum from the roughest comp might have served Norwich's needs just as well.

The home side were soon into their stride. A sharp ball from Jackson in the 10th minute sent Eddie squeezing through a flat-footed Oxford defence and he tucked a neat left-foot shot under the advancing Whitehead. With yesterday's strike marking his ninth goal in 13 City outings, the England Under-21 international remains a class apart at this level.

Once Moody had fought an apparent lost cause and pulled the ball back for Massey to level, so Norwich were left to contemplate a host of missed chances. Only Ipswich's defeat at Grimsby lightened the Bank Holiday mood.

"It's still wide open; it could even go down to goals scored," was Walker's reading of the push for that prized ticket to the Premiership.

As for United's Denis Smith, he offered the Norwich faithful a neat line in understatement. "We set out to frustrate them and achieved that to a certain extent." Completely would have been nearer the mark.

**Norwich City:** Gurr, Norman, Jackson, Crook, Bradshaw (Polson, 77), Scott, Adams, Fieck, Broughton (Forbes, 80), Milligan, Eddie.  
**Oxford United:** Whitehead; Robinson, Ford, Smith, Parry, Githens, Hargreaves (Beauchamp, 80), Gray, Moody (Alderidge, 70), Jensen, Massey. **Referee:** J Kirby (Sheffeld).

## Lifeline for Bournemouth

**B**OURNEMOUTH, the Second Division club struggling with debts of £4.7 million, have been rescued by their own supporters, the chairman of the club's trust fund, Trevor Watkins, claimed yesterday.

Watkins added that details of "Europe's first community-owned club" would be announced on several occasions but a public appeal has raised £160,000 and more than £1 million has been pledged by individuals and local businesses.

An agreement is believed to have been reached in principle to buy the club from Lloyds Bank, which sent in the receivers two months ago. Bournemouth's latest stay of execution was granted in Liverpool only 11 days ago. It elapses on May 15.

Yesterday Watkins promised that his announcement to Bournemouth supporters at tonight's match would assure them that the club's long High Court battle for survival has been successful.

As Charlton's manager Alan Curbishley pointed out, the fact that both teams are safe was a contributory factor to the stalemate.

"We came into the game after a great win at West Brom, and in the first half my players thought they just had to survive," he said. "We had a bit of a row at half-time, they knew they hadn't done enough. But we got out of that mode and, if anyone was going to score, I felt it would be us."

Birmingham City 0, Charlton Athletic 0

## Safe and sounding hollow

Tom Evans

**A**PLEASANT afternoon in the St Andrews sunshine served only to underline the accuracy of the First Division table. Neither Birmingham nor Charlton need concern themselves with sleepless nights worrying about relegation, but the play-offs are now almost as inaccessible for both clubs.

As Charlton's manager Alan Curbishley pointed out, the fact that both teams are safe was a contributory factor to the stalemate.

"We came into the game after a great win at West Brom, and in the first half my players thought they just had to survive," he said. "We had a bit of a row at half-time, they knew they hadn't done enough. But we got out of that mode and, if anyone was going to score, I felt it would be us."

However, the closest Charlton came to a breakthrough was by way of an own-goal. Birmingham's central defender Dave Barnett reached Gary Poole's 51st-minute centre ahead of Carl Leaburn and succeeded only in nudging it goalwards. The goalkeeper Ian Bennett managed to claw the ball to safety.

Birmingham also fashioned a couple of good chances. Paul Furlong saw his 36-minute header come off the underside of the bar and Paul Tait should have done better than volley when he had time to bring Birmingham's downward header under control in a promising position.

While Birmingham's £1.5 million record signing displayed considerable power in the air, he was rather less than competent with the ball at his feet.

But Birmingham's manager Trevor Francis was not too harsh on his players as they

failed to follow up Saturday's excellent win at Crystal Palace. He felt that the heat took its toll — particularly as the Blues had faced a gruelling game 48 hours earlier while Charlton had been resting.

"We were asked to play at 3pm on Monday, having just played on Saturday," he said. "You can't help but short-change the public. That's what having a schedule like this leads to. The tanks were dry, we'd run out of energy and in the end it was a fairly predictable 0-0."

"If we're going to play on a Monday, both teams should have the problem. It's totally unfair that one has had 10 days' rest."

**Birmingham City:** Bennett; Sans, Granger, Johnson (Robinson, 50min), Alder, Hutchinson (Spodden, 54), Furling, (Lego, 77), Hughes (Francis, 58).  
**Charlton Athletic:** Patterson; Poole, Barnes, O'Connell, Rufus, Palmer, Jones, Kinnella.  
**Referee:** C Wilkes (Gloucester).

Division Three: Swansea City 2, Chester City 1

## Just like old times for Molby and Ratcliffe

Grahame Lloyd

**J**AN MOLBY and Kevin Ratcliffe were Merseyside rivals in their derby days when Liverpool and Everton collected League and Cup trophies in the 1980s. The former Welsh captain now masterminded Chester's promotion challenge from the dugout, but Molby is still centre stage.

The Dane has been out with groin and hamstring injuries this season and his return has been vital to Swansea. Ten days ago his penalty secured a point against Darlington, on Saturday a free-kick and penalty built victory at Rochdale, and yesterday he was on the spot again.

In the 10th minute his long throw from the right was headed back by Steve Jones at the near post and Penney was brought down as shaped to attempt an overhead kick. After

a delay while the referee explained his decision to the bemused Chester players, Molby coolly stepped up to score low to Sinclair's right.

Filitoft hit a post for Chester before half-time but six minutes after the break Molby's weak corner from the left was touched on by Edwards for Turley to head his 10th goal of the season.

A similar goal on the hour involving Alistair, Filitoft and Alsford gave Chester hope of at least a point, but despite plenty of possession and the occasional goalmouth skirmish Freestone was never seriously troubled again. Indeed, Torpey and Coates both hit the post in the 88th minute.

"This was a great result for us," said Molby. "It was our second win in three days. We've had a good Easter."

"Jan did all right," Ratcliffe grudgingly admitted. "We've

lost our first game in 13. It was a good penalty, even though it shouldn't have been given, and a bad corner." He could not resist adding: "But Jan's playing in a style that suits him. He can influence events and the referee. He sometimes referees the game for the ref."

"That's his problem, isn't it?" Molby retorted. "Kevin has told his boys to kick everything that moved in the first 25 minutes. That's when the ref lost the plot — not because I was talking to him."

Swansea's victory takes them four points ahead of Chester with five games left, but both managers are confident of reaching the play-offs.

**Swansea City:** Freestone; Thomas, Hile, Witter (Amos, 30min), Edwards, S Jones, Bryson, Penney, Torpey, Molby, Coates.  
**Chester City:** Sinclair; Davidson, I Jenkins, Reid, Woods, Alsford, Filitoft, Alistair, J Jones (Murphy, 71), Miller, Atton.  
**Referee:** R Styles (Warrington).

## Ireland face Cup qualifier without injured McGrath

**P**AUL MCGRATH was left behind yesterday when the Republic of Ireland flew to Skopje for tomorrow's World Cup qualifier against Macedonia because, the manager Mick McCarthy said, there was no chance of him being fit to play.

The Derby County defender, who was hoping to win his 84th cap, has twice dropped out late from previous international trips under the former Republic manager Jack Charlton leading to major inquiries. But their was no controversy this time, McCarthy insisted. "It's unfortunate but there was no point in bringing him. Paul is injured and would have no chance of playing on Wednesday."

The 37-year-old McGrath, Ireland's record cap holder, made an impressive international comeback against Wales last month. But has now damaged an Achilles tendon in training.

"It is the hard training grounds that are to blame, said McCarthy. "Paul was so close last night that he had to sit up in bed with his leg in ice. I left him until this morning hopeful that it would get better but in fact it's worse. It has swollen right up."

Patrick Glenn writes: Colin Hendry, the Blackburn defender, and the Hibs striker Darren Jackson led the Scotland stick parade before tomorrow's World Cup game with Austria. There were also mild anxieties about the goalkeeper Jim Leighton (swollen lip) and midfielder Paul McStay (ankle injury).

Jackson's bruised shoulder responded to treatment but the next day will determine whether he is available, though Scotland are cautiously optimistic.

Hendry is troubled by a groin strain which will require surgery at an end the season.

## Pools Forecast

| PA CARLISLE PREMIERSHIP |   |              |   |
|-------------------------|---|--------------|---|
| 1 Aston Villa           | v | Environ      | 1 |
| 2 Man Utd               | v | Derby        | 1 |
| 3 Middlesbrough         | v | Sunderland   | 1 |
| 4 Middlesbrough         | v | Sheff Wed    | 1 |
| SUNDERLAND LEAGUE       |   |              |   |
| 1 Barnsley              | v | Birmingham   | 1 |
| 2 Bolton                | v | QPR          | 1 |
| 3 Charlton              | v | Sheff Wed    | 1 |
| 4 Gillingham            | v | Huddersfield | 1 |
| 5 Ipswich               | v | Oldham       | 1 |
| 6 Luton                 | v | Port Vale    | 1 |
| 7 Notts                 | v | Sheff Wed    | 1 |
| 8 Shrewsbury            | v | West Brom    | 1 |
| 9 Shrewsbury            | v | Reading      | 1 |
| 10 Shrewsbury           | v | Sheff Wed    | 1 |
| 11 Wolves               | v | Wolves       | 1 |
| SECOND DIVISION         |   |              |   |
| 16 Bradford             | v | Shrewsbury   | 1 |
| 17 Bolton               | v | Bury         | 1 |
| 18 Burnley              | v | Millwall     | 1 |
| 19 Charlton             | v | Gillingham   | 1 |
| 20 Peterborough         | v | Southampton  | 1 |
| 21 Preston              | v | Plymouth     | 1 |
| 22 Shrewsbury           | v | Sheff Wed    | 1 |
| 23 Walsley              | v | Walsley      | 1 |
| 24 Walsley              | v | Walsley      | 1 |
| THIRD DIVISION          |   |              |   |
| 17 Bury                 | v | Hull         | 1 |
| 18 Cardiff              | v | Cardiff      | 1 |
| 19 Chester              | v | Fulham       | 1 |
| 20 Chester              | v | Wolves       | 1 |
| 21 Doncaster            | v | Doncaster    | 1 |
| 22 Exeter               | v | Exeter       | 1 |
| 23 Grimsby              | v | Grimsby      | 1 |
| 24 Hartford             | v | Colchester   | 1 |
| 25 Lincoln              | v | Swansea      | 1 |
| 26 Northampton          | v | Northampton  | 1 |
| 27 Rochdale             | v | Millwall     | 1 |
| 28 Southport            | v | Brighton     | 1 |
| FOURTH DIVISION         |   |              |   |
| 30 Accrington           | v | Accrington   | 1 |
| 31 Aldershot            | v | Alton        | 1 |
| 32 Alton                | v | Alton        | 1 |
| 33 Alton                | v | Alton        | 1 |
| 34 Alton                | v | Alton        | 1 |
| 35 Alton                | v | Alton        | 1 |
| 36 Alton                | v | Alton        | 1 |
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| 38 Alton                | v | Alton        | 1 |
| 39 Alton                | v | Alton        | 1 |
| 40 Alton                | v | Alton        | 1 |
| 41 Alton                | v | Alton        | 1 |
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| 48 Alton                | v | Alton        | 1 |
| 49 Alton                | v | Alton        | 1 |
| 50 Alton                | v | Alton        | 1 |

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Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Address: \_\_\_\_\_

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**Wolves tear into Wigan, page 13**  
**Bolton must wait, page 14**

**Macari gets marching orders, page 14**  
**First course to Menu, page 15**

# SportsGuardian

## THE IRISH GRAND NATIONAL



First footing... Jason Titley, who won the Aintree Grand National on Royal Athlete in 1995, brings Mudahim (No. 8) safely over the first fence yesterday

TOM HONAN

## Pitman completes full house

**Chris Hawkins sees Mudahim win the closest of verdicts at Fairyhouse**

JENNY PITMAN completed her collection of Grand Nationals yesterday when Mudahim snatched a desperately close victory at Fairyhouse in a race punctuated by tragedy. He was challenged to the post by the locally trained Ambie Speedy, who managed to put himself a neck in front on the run-in only to surrender in the final strides as Mudahim rallied with the utmost gallantry.

The Irish trainer Noel Meade lost two of his horses during the race — Coq Hardi Affair and The Latvian Lark — which led to the third- and second-last fences being omitted from the race while the horses were tended to.

That left a near half-mile gallop before the last fence, which troubled Mudahim more than it did Ambie Speedy and was almost his undoing. The two stricken

horses were subsequently put down.

"He was enjoying his jumping and would have won no trouble if it weren't for the fact they hadn't duffed off two of the last three fences. But on the long run to the last he began pricking his ears and I thought we were scuttled. I'm surprised and obviously delighted that the verdict has gone our way," said the winning jockey, Jason Titley.

The judge's verdict that the 13-2 chance had won surprised most of the crowd and — more important — the horse's trainer. "That was a real thrill," said Pitman. "I thought he was beaten and so did Jason. We've now won the lot."

Titley seems to be her lucky jockey. He was on board when Royal Athlete, a rank outsider, won at Aintree two years ago. She has also won

that race with Corbiere having taken the Scottish with Willsford, the Welsh with Burrough Hill Lad and the Midlands with both Willsford and Watafella.

Mudahim had been entered for the Liverpool Grand National and it was only last week that the decision was made to go to Ireland instead. "I thought these fences would suit him better," explained the trainer. "As he had problems with his jumping before he came to me and for a while after I thought it wiser than going to Aintree."

Mudahim, an 11-year-old, only joined Pitman last summer from Chris Broad's stable and since the switch has won over £100,000 for his syndicate of owners, the In Touch Racing Club.

Titley rode a patient race on the first circuit but moved up Mudahim to dispute the lead with Corymandel going out into the country for the second time.

It was a mile from home that the jockey decided it was

time to seize the initiative and, head down in his round shouldered, crouched style, drove Mudahim to the front. The objective was to steal a decisive advantage. That proved impossible in the circumstances but victory was theirs anyhow. Mudahim seemed injured when he was pulled up but, after an examination having been unsaddled, proved to be sound.

Mrs Pitman became the first woman to train a Grand National winner with Corbiere in 1983 and she achieved a similar feat when winning the Cheltenham Gold Cup with Burrough Hill Lad a year later.

The Lambourn trainer has an empathy with horses verging on the genius and spends hours studying her animals in their stable boxes.

She now has the chance to land two Nationals within a week when she sends Smith's Band and Nahthen Land to Aintree on Saturday. Only the unromantic would bet against her.



Pitman... "That was a real thrill"

## Formula One viewers kept out of picture



Richard Williams

**N**OW I know why Bernie Ecclestone sold Formula One to ITV. It wasn't the £70 million. That was just a bonus. No, he knew it would drive us into the arms of digital television, in which he has a far deeper interest.

That much seems disturbingly obvious after a weekend spent absorbing the commercial channel's attempt to deliver an enhanced version of what the BBC used to give us. And the result was bad enough to suggest that the noise of a grid full of 700-horsepower engines will soon be drowned by the sound of lawnmowers being revved up as the nation discovers a more satisfying way of spending a sunny Sunday afternoon.

Starting at the most basic level, the pictures of Sunday's Brazilian Grand Prix were a disgrace. Unbelievably, Ecclestone still allows the host broadcaster in each country to call the shots for their home grand prix. So ITV was forced to take the feed from its Brazilian equivalent, using pictures chosen by the local director.

This person, despite plying his or her trade in a country that produced three world champions, gave evidence of never having seen a motor race before. The only thing worth watching, in their view, was the race leader.

Racing, of course, is not like that. While Jacques Villeneuve sprinted off into the distance, the action worth our close attention was taking place further down the field. Yet, no doubt to the delight of Villeneuve's sponsors, we were forced to watch the Williams-Renault completing lap after uneventful lap while Schumacher, Berger, Hakkinen, Panis and Alesi were scrapping it out unseen.

The point of digital TV is that it will liberate us from the tyranny of a idiot at the controls, allowing each of us to call the shots for ourselves. Personally, however, I have never wanted to be a television director, even at weekends. I would rather be in the hands of someone with the competence and intelligence to do the job properly.

This sort of frustration used to occur from time to time in

the BBC's day, but an unbroken transmission made it possible to compensate, if you were prepared to summon all your concentration and absorb every fleeting bit of information. And therein lies the real problem with ITV's coverage. Once upon a time it was the teams that had pit-stop strategies. Now, thanks to ITV, it is the viewers. For the hour and a half of the race we were kept in suspense. Never mind whether the cars on Goodyear tyres were planning a third stop. Would it be a three-stop strategy for us, or four?

The two-minute breaks would be less of a problem if the commentators were anyone other than Murray Walker. Before long service and his transparent niceness turned Murray into one of the nation's folk heroes, his frequent mistakes were the cause of serious irritation. Gradually we learnt to use the evidence of our own eyes rather than rely on his over-excited commentary, and the irritation turned into fond amusement. But now we really need a reliable commentator, and Murray's erratic credibility is suddenly a problem once more.

**A**FTER a two-minute break midway through the race, what we require is an instant update, a precise summary of what we have missed. And if Murray was two minutes late in telling us that Damon Hill had gone from ninth to seventh off the start, which we had seen for ourselves when it happened, and if he failed to notice that Berger had overtaken Hakkinen, how can we believe what he tells us when we are reunited after a break?

Martin Brundle, his new partner, should be providing the accurate prompting. Fine as an analyst of the action, so far he is no more credible than Murray as a commentator. On Sunday he chattered on about Johnny Herbert when the man we were watching had already been correctly identified by Walker as Herbert's teammate Nicola Larini.

When Walker resumed the commentary, he repeated Larini's name without explicitly correcting Brundle's error. This highlighted another problem: the two of them are so keen not to damage the credibility of their new partner and of the programme as a whole that they are not inclined to rectify the other man's errors, even though this is doing the viewer a disservice.

I can think of someone who wouldn't have stood for that. Wherever he is spending the afterlife, James Hunt must be first in the queue for one of Bernie's digital decoders.

## Schoolboy Luke, 13, is world's youngest international master

Leonard Barden

**L**UKE McSHANE, the 13-year-old chess prodigy, has become the youngest UK international master, breaking the age record held by Nigel Short and Matthew Sadler by more than a year.



McShane... chess prodigy

Judit Polgar of Hungary set the all-time record in 1988 at 12, but Luke is now the youngest IM in the world after scoring the third and final result he needed at Geisenkirchen this weekend.

His two previous IM norms were achieved at small UK events at Edinburgh and Cardiff, but the German event was far stronger with a field of 84 masters and experts, mostly German and East European professionals.

Luke finished eighth, scoring 6½ points from his 10 games with four wins and five draws, including one with the tournament winner, the Ukraine grandmaster Konstantin Lerner. His single defeat came against the No.1 Czech grandmaster and top seed, Sergei Movsesian.

Luke's father, mother and stepfather are all journalists, a line that continued when he recently joined the Sunday Express as chess columnist.

In a few days he returns to Westminster School as an ordinary pupil, but with the British Championship to look forward to at Hove in August.

## Venables director quits

**Nick Varley on the angry resignation of a Portsmouth stalwart over running of the club**

**T**HE business methods of the former England coach Terry Venables are in the spotlight again following the resignation of a director at his new club Portsmouth.

Vic Jenner, a local businessman and former magistrate, resigned from the board in protest at the way the club is being run by the chairman Venables and his business associate Eddie Ashby.

An official statement from Fratton Park put the resignation down to the director wanting to spend more time with his family, but he told a different story.

"I have resigned because after a lifetime in business I was used to certain standards of practice and those were not being met," he said.

"I am proud of my standards and felt I had no al-

ternative but to resign. I have resigned because I have seen the way the club is being run. We extend our thanks to him for all the time and hard work he has put in and wish him all the best in his retirement."

Jenner was furious at the misrepresentation of the reason for his resignation.

"When I decided to go I agreed a statement which would be released by the club — but when it was released it was not the statement I had agreed and I was not happy with it."

"There are certain individuals within the club taking responsibilities which they should not be given. I am not willing to name names."

"I have been a lifelong supporter of Portsmouth and with the club in a play-off position and doing so well this season this is not a decision I have taken lightly."

"I have to say I do not like the way the club is now being run."

but an official statement said: "We are sorry to see Vic leave the board but understand his reasons. We extend our thanks to him for all the time and hard work he has put in and wish him all the best in his retirement."

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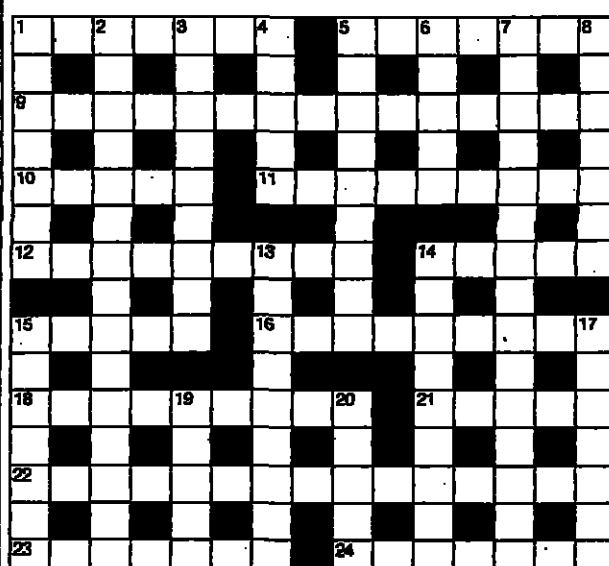
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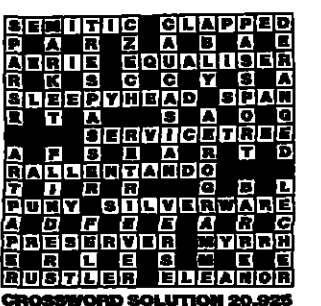
"I have to say I do not like the way the club is now being run."

## Guardian Crossword No 20,926

Set by Fawley



- Across**
- Examiner has car with recurrent corrosion (7)
  - Wine is almost heaven, taken after tea (7)
  - Previously popular, a sad doctor gets about very rarely (4,2,1,4,4)
  - Show respect — that is a large knife (5)
  - Forced to hide false alarm in a sort of jam (5)
  - Spreading growth of insulting terms like "bird" and "wimp"? (5)
  - Make a little progress in most of finances (5)
  - Landing-pler may be very dark (5)
  - About to bow, taken in by friend of church official (5)
  - Just the same gunner drunk in bed (5)
- Down**
- I exist in deep sleep, set up like a primitive life-form (7)
  - He headed for London, reaching 100mph — following week detectives turned up (4,11)
  - Make feeble attempt to listen more than once a month (3-6)
  - Field covered by Old Moore — almanacs (5)
  - Post, after conversion, gloried in the church (5)



- Crossword Solution 20,926**
- New in a field — the field of battle? (5)
  - Versatile genius in Old Vic — one RADA trained (8,2,5)
  - Honest, after moral instruction (7)
  - Newspaper almost cunning, in a specific way? (9)
  - Charge up, interrupting hunter's assistant — one of the old guard (5)
  - Lifting gear on vessel — it may be worth millions (7)
  - Clothes for baby that's overdue, still stashed away (7)
  - Fury about name for line of products (5)
  - Fish experiment ignores unknown factor (5)
- Solution tomorrow**
- "Stuck? Then call our solutions line on 0800 330 228. Calls cost 50p per minute at all times. Service supplied by ATIS."
- NEWSPAPER SUPPORT**  
 Recycled paper made  
 40% from waste  
 recycled for UK news-  
 papers by Newsprint  
 Recycled 1996

**The Emergency was only 20 years ago, but it seems an unreachable era. The public are not to be instructed, but seduced. "Work is worship" has long since been replaced by slogans for mobile phones, saris, fans, faxes, airlines. One that I liked read: "before air pollution kills you slowly, choose 'Forest Air' air freshener."**

**32 cover story**